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AN INVESTIGATION  
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INTO CURRENT METHODOLOGIES  
FOR BIBLICAL PREACHING

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The School of Theology

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for  
Doctor of Religion

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by  
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" "  
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## CHAPTER I

### BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS AND THE PREACHING MINISTRY

#### BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR PREACHING

Currently there is a movement toward Biblical preaching. In contrast to the past decades of topical preaching, the new emphasis is placed on content rather than form. Dwight Stevenson reminds us that there have been those who have claimed to be "biblical preachers" but who have missed the central thrust of the Biblical material.<sup>1</sup> They are those who claim to have been faithfully preaching the "word of God" and suddenly awaken to discover that their messages do not remotely resemble the intentions of the writers of the Old and New Testaments.

Hence, we find two groups of preachers who have two things in common: ineffectiveness coupled with a lack of understanding of the Biblical material. On the one hand, we have those who built a sermon on an idea which may or may not have had any relationship to Biblical thought. On the other hand, we have those who have claimed to be

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<sup>1</sup>Dwight E. Stevenson, In the Biblical Preacher's Workshop (New York: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 15.

faithful to the "Word," but really have no understanding of Biblical content.

K. Morgan Edwards has said in connection with this phenomenon, "when preaching goes sour in any generation the chances are that theology turned rancid a generation earlier."<sup>2</sup> He cites the inadequate preaching of our time as one of the results of the theological poverty "which has characterized the American church for almost a century."<sup>3</sup> Henry Steele Commager reiterates this same point by saying that "during the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, organized religion prospered while theology went slowly bankrupt."<sup>4</sup>

Effective preaching is here defined as that which faithfully relates the content of the Biblical theology and intention of the writers of the Biblical material in a manner which is both relevant and intelligible to contemporary man. This definition does not imply that such a new thrust will produce great numbers of people occupying the

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<sup>2</sup>K. Morgan Edwards, "Essentials of the Word" (School of Theology at Claremont, Claremont, 1969), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>quoted by Sidney Mead, The Lively Experiment (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 55.

currently empty pews in America. Much of the Biblical material is that which men need to hear, but is not necessarily what they want to hear. Effective preaching implies a keen sense of awareness of the problems involved in relating as faithfully as possible, the intention of the writers of the Biblical text.

The new thrust in Biblical preaching today is not a look backward, but forward. It is not a return to any period in history which our ancestors have known. The "great" preachers of this century and the last cannot be our guide or example. Instead, this new thrust forces us to look carefully at our "presuppositions and principles of Biblical interpretation."<sup>5</sup> The primary concern now has become hermeneutics (i.e., interpretation) and the disciplines of exegesis rather than the emphasis on outlines and clever ideas alone.

Our primary question under this section is this: why is a Biblical foundation necessary for effective and relevant preaching? The first reason why serious Biblical understanding is necessary is for identifying through the sermon the uniqueness of the Christian faith in relation-

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<sup>5</sup>Stevenson, op. cit., p. 16.

ship to other world religions. The twentieth century has produced a generation of theologians (particularly among the Natural Theologians) who ask serious questions as to the uniqueness of Christianity when placed in the total context of world religions. The ability to make such comparisons presupposes a competent knowledge and use of the Biblical material.<sup>6</sup> The preaching ministry should aid people in this comparative study. Biblical competence for the preacher in relation to this task is imperative.

The second reason why serious Biblical understanding is necessary is for the preacher to be able to identify the elements of our Christian heritage which are to be applied to our culture. Should the religion of a transient culture of five thousand years ago have an effect on our way of living today? Should the writings of men who addressed people under the Roman Empire during the first century have effects on our customs, attitudes, judgments and characteristics in the twentieth century? What teaching should affect our living and what should not? Only by having a firm grasp of the intent of the Biblical material

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<sup>6</sup>An example of this form of comparison is John B. Cobb, Jr., The Structure of Christian Existence (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968).



can we begin to wrestle with the critical problem of identifying how and why elements of a first century faith should have effect upon a culture two thousand years removed from the events which brought forth that faith.

The third reason why serious Biblical understanding is necessary is on account of the new understanding which has come to the Biblical material through Biblical criticism. Some people have cited the development of the scientific method of investigation as having revolutionized the approach to Biblical material. Now the Bible is being examined in order to discover the "origins of the books; the background that lies behind them; the sources from which they may have drawn, and the particular circumstances that brought them into being in their present form."<sup>7</sup> Preaching from the Biblical material today with the aid of the Critical-Historical method implies that the intention of the Biblical material is respected and sought after above all else.

The fourth reason why serious Biblical understanding is necessary is on account of the fact that the Bible

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<sup>7</sup>Gurdon C. Oxtoby, Biblical Foundations for Belief and Action (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), p. 9.

"is the medium through which the church is able to apprehend again and again, and to reconstruct, the history which has reproduced her and the events which provide her with norms by which to order her life."<sup>8</sup> The Christian preacher has no other place to look than to the Biblical texts in order to understand his unique historical origin. Without the Biblical witness the preacher cannot show any distinction between the claims of his faith and those of other faiths and philosophies. Ignoring the wealth of Biblical witness as a foundation for understanding the direction which Christian activity should take in this world would be like imitating the fool who learns by his own mistakes in the present rather than from the mistakes of others in the past. To know what direction Christian faith should take in the future means that we must know what and where it has been in the past.

The task of the preaching ministry today emphasizes the importance of content more than form. This shift is one away from style to that of interpretation. This shift in emphasis is the result of new methods by which we might

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<sup>8</sup>Gordon D. Kaufman, Systematic Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. 488.

come closer to the intent of the Biblical materials. The Critical-Historical method of interpretation has been largely responsible for this shift in emphasis in preaching. We shall now turn to the subject of the Critical-Historical method and its relationship to contemporary preaching.

### THE CRITICAL-HISTORICAL METHOD AND THE PREACHING MINISTRY

The modern age of Christian faith has rejected the self-evident validity that was ascribed to the scriptures in western history over one thousand years.<sup>9</sup> The Word of God was classically understood to be equated with the scriptures, thus making God Himself the author. Now Christians are more inclined to view the scriptures as the word of men reporting the activity and their experience of the activity of God in the world.<sup>10</sup>

Current Biblical interpretation has almost entirely been based upon the Critical-Historical method of research.

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<sup>9</sup>Gerhard Ebeling, Word and Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 43.

<sup>10</sup>Stevenson, op. cit., p. 34.

The current thrust toward Biblical preaching is new because of its utilization of the Critical-Historical method.

Stevenson calls this utilization getting "scholarship and preaching back together following a long estrangement."<sup>11</sup>

The meaning and actual process of this method will become more evident as we discuss it briefly under this section.

The meaning of its effect on preaching will be demonstrated under the final section of this dissertation.

When the Critical-Historical approach to Biblical interpretation is accepted, it does not mean that a measuring rod has been created by which to get precise answers to questions raised about Biblical material.<sup>12</sup> The results from this methodological approach are not always the same, but there is more agreement than disagreement among scholars in relationship to this approach.

In the past, the Critical-Historical approach was rejected by many Biblical scholars, but currently has little opposition.<sup>13</sup> The main questions in contention at the

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>12</sup>Ebeling, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>13</sup>R. C. Briggs, Interpreting the Gospels (New York: Abingdon Press, 1969), p. 18.

present time are, what shall we make of the results of our research? Whose results shall we choose? How much can we relate our findings to the church and twentieth century man?

The Critical-Historical method has eighteenth century roots. Briggs points out that some people object to this recent methodology impinging upon scripture which has served as a source of inspiration for over seventeen centuries. But those who would object on this ground must also reject the conveniences which have been ushered in by the scientific revolution. It is the scientific method which ultimately led to the necessity for the Critical-Historical method. To be consistent then, those who reject a more scientific approach to Biblical material must also reject the scientific method of investigation which ushered in the necessity for this method. The scientific method which has ushered in new comfort and convenience has also made us raise questions about some of our unfounded assumptions about the Bible.

The problem which calls forth the necessity of the Critical-Historical method of research is the contemporary problem of finding meaning and relevance for the church

today from scriptures.<sup>14</sup> The self-evident meaning which some proclaimed to be inherent in the scriptures has been shown to be non-existent. The great variety of protestant denominations, the problems of sectarianism, and the schisms which today threaten the foundation of the Roman Catholic Church, all attest to the fact that the meaning of the scriptures for twentieth century man are not self-evident. Hence, a need has arisen to journey closer to the original sources so that a more precise intention of the Biblical message may be obtained. The Critical-Historical method is a part of that journey.

Some Christians do not realize that when they label forms of Biblical criticism as new, they are actually labeling the whole process of the history of Christian thought as being something new. Methodological attempts at interpretation have ancestral roots in church history. Ebeling says that "church history is the history of the exposition of scripture."<sup>15</sup> Church history reveals the continuing need to devise methodological approaches to

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>15</sup>Gerhard Ebeling, The Word of God and Tradition (London: Collins, 1968), p. 11.

Biblical literature. For example, the Gnostics raised historical issues which called for critical analysis. The Renaissance and Enlightenment also brought forth a critical approach known as the principle of tradition.<sup>16</sup>

Martin Luther and the Reformation represent another era in a struggle to devise an adequate approach to the interpretation of scripture. Luther challenged the principle of tradition as a norm for scriptural interpretation. Tradition in Luther's day meant that the sayings of the church fathers such as Irenaeus were authoritative for the church. These sayings of the church fathers were to be understood as the primary sources in understanding scripture. Luther broke with this tradition by advancing the principle of sola scriptura. This meant that only the scriptures were to be the source of church authority. He insisted that their message was clear enough and needed no allegorical assistance from tradition. This principle of Luther's actually underlies the understanding of scripture of the main protestant denominations today.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Briggs, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

Today there is a necessity to go beyond Luther's categories. His formulation implies that solutions to all problems which arise in history must come out of the scriptures only. Therefore, for Luther, science, history and theology would be of no value for these problems. Positively speaking, in relation to this principle, this protestant principle of sola scriptura has "stimulated Protestant scholars to approach the task of scriptural interpretation with a seriousness that otherwise would not have been possible. Concisely stated, Historical Critical methodology represents the techniques that have been developed to answer questions arising by adherence to the principle of sola scriptura."<sup>18</sup>

We shall now center more directly upon the various processes implied in the formulae "Critical Historical method." The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible provides categorical headings which will be of use for our itemization here but which are not totally adequate for a thorough understanding of the Critical-Historical method. More detailed discussion of the various processes listed

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<sup>18</sup>  
Ibid., p. 21.



here will be taken up under methodologies in this dissertation.

First, in the Critical-Historical approach, philological competence is required. Biblical criticism concerns the use of literature and hence competence in the use of the language being employed. Second, textual criticism involves work which will render the best text available to the serious student of the scriptures. With several options available for usage, the critic must decide which will be used for the sermon. Third, the literary critic must ask himself whether the writing before him is integral or composite. He must decide if it is the work of one writer or if it represents a compilation of material. Historical criticism is the question of authorship: is the writing actually the work of the author named or an author named by church tradition? The answer is highly subjective and thus accounts for the wide variety of opinions in this area of research. Fourth, form criticism has been directed more increasingly to the different types of oral tradition and to the rules of change and modification within a

tradition.<sup>19</sup> The most thorough work in the area of the Critical-Historical method is that of Klaus Koch, The Growth of the Biblical Tradition. The purpose of gaining background knowledge through the Critical-Historical method is that the exegete might be able to go on to further questions in relationship to the text which deal with God, man, and the world. These elements listed are only part of the totality which comprises the Critical-Historical method.

The preaching minister and the scholar should both practice the use of the Critical-Historical method. They essentially should travel on the same path of research. However, the scholar should be far ahead in his depth of knowledge and understanding of the Critical-Historical method. The preaching minister should interpret texts with the exegetical means acquired from the scholar or specialist. The preaching minister himself must practice making competent decisions about texts. Basically, experience in exegesis under some type of specialist is the key to mastering the use of the Critical-Historical method of research.

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<sup>19</sup>K. Grobel, "Biblical Criticism," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, I, 413.

## DEFINITION OF HERMENEUTICS

### General Hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics is a philosophical methodology not just confined to theology. Hermeneutics is as broad as understanding itself.<sup>20</sup> Every product which confronts the human mind is subject to hermeneutics (i.e., interpretation), or more forcefully stated, demands hermeneutics. General Hermeneutics centers upon devising a method which can be applied to various subjects or objects for the purpose of interpretation. The product may be sculpturing, painting, a symphony or drama. The subject might also be a law code or a document of religion.<sup>21</sup>

In order to define more adequately General Hermeneutics, we shall examine James M. Robinson's treatment of the word.<sup>22</sup> Robinson says that our term hermeneutic only partially corresponds to the Greek equivalent noun

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<sup>20</sup>Statement by Rolf Knierim, Old Testament Hermeneutic course, Claremont, California, Summer Semester 1968.

<sup>21</sup>K. Grobel, "Interpretation," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, II, 718.

<sup>22</sup>James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr. (eds.) The New Hermeneutic (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

hermeneia. This Greek word corresponded to the Latin verb interpretari, which means to "interpret."

The Greek word hermeneia meant interpretation in a general sense and could be applied to

whatever activity was involved in bringing the unclear to clarity. Indeed it is this broad scope of clarification, rather than any one specific kind of clarification, that seems to be basic to hermeneia. It is in this way that one is to understand the constant application of hermeneia to the messages of the gods, in that they are by their very nature mysterious, obscure, and in need of clarification. The Hermeneia of the will of the gods doubtless shared in this broad, numinous sensitivity even when the hermenia in question has become specific and concrete.<sup>23</sup>

An additional problem to the entire process of interpretation is that the actual process of translating written material becomes a process of interpretation itself:

. . . one of the common meanings of interpretation, since Cicero's time at the latest, is translation. For every translator 'carries over' into the language only what he understands the original language to be saying; in other words, between the translator's reading of the original and his transmutation of it there lies a fundamental act of interpretation; it is only what he thinks the original means that he can translate.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Grobel, "Interpretation," II, 719.

There is one essential in the process of hermeneutics: language. Rolf Knierim asserts that we as human beings do not know what it would be like to be able to interpret a subject or object without the vehicle of language. Certain persons are opposed to this basic premise, namely Suzanne Langer<sup>25</sup> and the Natural Theologians.<sup>26</sup> These would assert that hermeneutics can take place in non-discursive forms, i.e., forms which do not demand the medium of logical argument transmitted through language. This certainly has no relevance for those concerned about a hermeneutic of the Biblical texts which totally involves the confrontation of interpreter with written language and hence the task of transmitting understanding in and through language.<sup>27</sup>

We have shown that our word hermeneutic has its roots in a Greek word meaning interpretation in a general sense. Only as we are confronted by unique problems today

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<sup>25</sup>Suzanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

<sup>26</sup>John B. Cobb, Jr., A Christian Natural Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965).

<sup>27</sup>Knierim, op. cit.

which present specific problems and questions relative to a particular subject or object are we aware of the need to devise a specific hermeneutic. The study of the Biblical literature is one area which presents unique problems for the interpreter, and hence demands a specific hermeneutic.

### Specific Hermeneutics

The Bible multiplies the necessity for a specific hermeneutical method because of the fact that much interpretation has taken place on the very pages which are sought to be interpreted. The interpretation found within the Bible is in two categories: (1) the dreams, riddles, figurative expressions and of the "older New Testament in its youngest portions" (Matthew 10:10 in I Timothy 5:18); and (2) the interpretation which goes on between the two testaments. For example, when a New Testament writer quotes an Old Testament passage, it is written in Greek. This action demanded some existential interpretive moves on the part of the interpreter.

This dissertation will show that part of this ancient problem of interpretation can be more adequately handled and understood through a proper methodology. But,

nowhere shall it be implied that a new methodology will solve all of the problems connected with a specific hermeneutic as itemized above.

Now we must move one step further in our discussion of hermeneutics: Biblical Hermeneutics is a specific hermeneutic which demands two sub-divisions: Old Testament and New Testament. We shall turn now to a discussion of the differences involved in interpreting these two portions of the Bible.

Old Testament. The task of Old Testament Hermeneutics is to interpret the meaning of Old Testament literature in light of New Testament faith. The nature of this interpretive task today has been greatly affected by the archaeological results of recent time, the traditional historical studies, form criticism, and historical research. Now we are confronted with evaluating this bulk of material and findings in order to answer the question, "what does the Old Testament have to do with faith, preaching and instruction in the church?"<sup>28</sup> The key difference between Old Testament Hermeneutic and New Testament Hermeneutic is

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<sup>28</sup>Carl E. Braaten, History and Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 118.

that with the Old Testament the texts are approached from the standpoint of the Christian faith.

In order to talk about Old Testament Hermeneutic, we must examine those main options which have emerged from several scholars and schools of thought. Carl E. Braaten has brilliantly summarized the four directions which Old Testament Hermeneutics appear to be moving.<sup>29</sup> We shall here utilize his four main divisions in order to examine these current options.

The first option is the Christological interpretation of the Old Testament. Karl Barth<sup>30</sup> and Wilhelm Vischer<sup>31</sup> contend that the Old Testament is a witness to Jesus Christ. Barth says that revelation in the Old Testament is valid for us because in it Jesus Christ is manifest as the expected One.

Vischer applied Barth's ideas to a three volume work called The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ.

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 118ff.

<sup>30</sup>Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), I/2, 72.

<sup>31</sup>Wilhelm Vischer, "Everywhere the Scripture Is About Christ Alone," in B. W. Anderson (ed.) The Old Testament and Christian Faith (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).



Vischer says "The two main words of the Christian confession 'Jesus is the Christ'----the personal name 'Jesus' and the vocational name 'Christ'----correspond to the two parts of the Holy Scriptures: the New and the Old Testament. The Old Testament tells us what the Christ is; the New, who He is."<sup>32</sup>

Barth and Vischer both make a dogmatic statement about a different historical epoch. Knierim would argue against this point from an historical standpoint. He objects to this approach because it violates the principle of letting the Old Testament speak for itself in its own terms. Arguing historically, Knierim says that it was not God in Jesus Christ acting in the Old Testament but was Yahweh acting in direct relationship to persons in the Old Testament.<sup>33</sup>

Knierim further argues that an Old Testament hermeneutic should not be done from a preconceived dogmatic pattern as proposed by Barth and Vischer, but should be done from specific exegesis of an Old Testament text out of

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<sup>32</sup>Wilhelm Vischer, The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949), p. 7.

<sup>33</sup>Knierim, op. cit.

which we would have to (1) recognize the intention of the Old Testament text and (2) after historical exegesis bring it into dialogue with the New Testament text----then see what it says to us today.<sup>34</sup>

The second option is the Existentialist interpretation of the Old Testament. Rudolph Bultmann<sup>35</sup> and Friedrich Baumgartel<sup>36</sup> interpret "the Old Testament as witness to human existence under the law."<sup>37</sup> Bultmann links the law/gospel concept to an existentialist view of man and salvation.

First, Bultmann says that the prophecies of the Old Testament have not been fulfilled in the New Testament. The Critical-Historical method for him shows that we have not rightly understood the relationship of prophecy in the Old Testament as being fulfilled in the New Testament. Bultmann says that we have worked backwards and have sought

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, "The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith," in Anderson, op. cit.

<sup>36</sup>Friedrich Baumgartel, "The Hermeneutical Problem of the Old Testament," in Claus Westermann (ed.) Essays on Old Testament Interpretation (London: SCM Press, 1963).

<sup>37</sup>Braaten, op. cit., p. 121.

to show events of the New Testament as being answers to the promises of the Old Testament. These feeble attempts at justifying our faith in Christ by logical argument, says Bultmann, are in the end a block to our having faith.

Second, Bultmann says that one cannot compare the Old Testament covenant idea and the Kingdom of God concept of the New Testament.<sup>38</sup> Israel saw herself as a covenant people under God in empirical terms. This phenomenon for Israel was an actual happening in this world. Bultmann says that the New Testament concept of the community is not a community "as a historical entity within the world . . . The new covenant is a radically eschatological dimension, that is, a dimension outside the world, and to belong to it takes its members out of the world."<sup>39</sup>

Bultmann sees the value of the Old Testament in a negative way. Bultmann calls Old Testament history a "miscarriage of history."<sup>40</sup> By this he means that we are driven to Christ as we are revealed man's contradictions

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, "Prophecy and Fulfillment," in Westermann, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

under the law. By seeing the failure of Israel, the Old Testament helps us by preparing us to receive the Gospel.

Third, Bultmann would deny that the history of Israel contains any revelation for the Christian. "To the Christian faith the Old Testament is not in the true sense God's Word. So far as the Church proclaims the Old Testament as God's Word, it just finds in it again what is already known from the revelation in Jesus Christ."<sup>41</sup>

Braaten doubts that Luther's concept of law and gospel was ever intended to obliterate the value of the Old Testament for men of every age. Today, the formulae of law and gospel is not a good vehicle by which to differentiate between the Old and New Testament. Bultmann mistakenly uses this law/gospel formulae to undermine the historical foundation upon which the formulae must stand in order to be rational.<sup>42</sup>

The third option in Old Testament Hermeneutics today is the typological interpretation of the Old Testament.

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<sup>41</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, "The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith," in Anderson, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>42</sup>Braaten, op. cit., pp. 124, 125.

Gerhard von Rad<sup>43</sup> and Hans Walter Wolff<sup>44</sup> contend that there is a continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The method which they use to support this proposition is the typological method. Von Rad states in his essay that the typological way of thinking seeks to discover a relation of correspondence between certain types in the Old Testament, such as persons, institutions, or events, which foreshadow similar realities, or antitypes, in the New Testament.<sup>45</sup>

Walther Eichrodt makes a clear distinction between typology and allegory. Allegory does not have respect for the historical sense like the typological method does. The historical plays the most important role in interpretation under the typological method whereas this type of respect for the historical does not exist in an allegorical approach.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Gerhard von Rad, "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," in Westermann, op. cit.

<sup>44</sup>Hans Walter Wolff, "The Hermeneutics of the Old Testament," in Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Braaten, op. cit., p. 125.

<sup>46</sup>Walther Eichrodt, "Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method," in Westermann, op. cit.

Von Rad advances one analogy between the two testaments as primary: the one "between God's redemptive work in the Old Covenant and the Christ event in the New."<sup>47</sup> The prime concern must be Christological or else the typological method will become burdened with the comparison of many useless details in both the Old and New Testaments. It follows then that the God who acted in Christ is the same who acted in relationship to the people of the Old Testament. Von Rad is suggesting that the criterion for interpreting Old Testament texts actually becomes their correspondence in the New Testament. For us the Old Testament comes into full understanding only as we relate its message to the fulfillment it points to in Christ.

Wolfhart Pannenberg suggests that his teacher's methodology is not entirely adequate for an Old Testament Hermeneutic. Pannenberg sees typological agreements between the Old and New Testaments but insists that the work of Old Testament Hermeneutic is not completed after this relationship is illustrated.<sup>48</sup> Typological

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<sup>47</sup>Braaten, op. cit.

<sup>48</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," in Westermann, op. cit.

interpretation of the Old Testament could become unhistorical and be content to establish relationships between linguistic similarities rather than historical similarities. Therefore, Pannenberg proposes that the relationship between Old and New Testament must be established within the "flow of history which moves from promise to fulfillment."<sup>49</sup>

Pannenberg represents the fourth option in Old Testament Hermeneutics today, the historical interpretation of the Old Testament. Walther Zimmerli<sup>50</sup> and Wolfhart Pannenberg<sup>51</sup> have acknowledged the promise/fulfillment scheme as the connecting link between the Old and New Testament. This direction of interpretation is called "historical" and raises some crucial questions. First, the secular view of history in a positivistic historical sense cannot be that which defines history. Second, an Old Testament interpretation must guard against a kerygmatic interpretation which seeks meaning solely apart from actual

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<sup>49</sup>Braaten, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>50</sup>Walter Zimmerli, "Promise and Fulfillment," in Westermann, op. cit.

<sup>51</sup>Pannenberg, op. cit., p. 314.

historical events. Von Rad calls the Old Testament a history book if we refer to Old Testament history as the peculiarly Biblical understanding of history as the ongoing redemptive activity of God, i.e., Heilsgeschichte. Hence, von Rad insists that "The Old Testament is a history not only of Israel's religious faith, but of God's activity in the real situations of Israel's earthly existence."<sup>52</sup>

Zimmerli sees the Old Testament as a great history of movement from promise to fulfillment. He poetically describes it like a river, saying that sometimes the movement is swift and other times it is slow.<sup>53</sup> The goal of this movement is Jesus Christ. God's good news in Jesus Christ is the final fulfillment of the promises. But then, does that mean that we who are under New Testament faith have been brought into the realization of the promises? The answer is no. At this point, we become aware of the proleptic nature ascribed to Jesus Christ by the Pannenberg Circle. The fulfillment of the Old Testament promises were not actualized in Christ except for the fact that he showed us in advance what will happen to all of us at that time of

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<sup>52</sup>Braaten, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>53</sup>Zimmerli, op. cit., pp. 111, 112.



fulfillment. What happened in the resurrection of Jesus is what will happen to all of us at the end of time. This end time is when the Kingdom of God will be actualized and God Himself will be made known in His essence. Even though Jesus' resurrection showed us proleptically the actualization of the Old Testament promises in the act of fulfillment, we as Christians still wait in faith and hope that this event will be actualized among us.<sup>54</sup>

This eschatological significance of Christ does not put an end to the Old Testament; instead Christ is revealed as the end purpose of the stretch of history in the Old Testament.

After enumerating these four options, it becomes increasingly clear that it is impossible to define Old Testament Hermeneutics apart from the various perspectives herein presented. The intent here was only to give an overview and not an exhaustive comprehension of the options open to us for an Old Testament Hermeneutic. This same process must now be applied to the area of New Testament Hermeneutics.

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<sup>54</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus---God and Man (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968).

New Testament. Specific Hermeneutics in a New Testament sense is a process in which Christians seek to bridge the gap between a first century faith, culture, world view, and method of human understanding to our own time. New Testament Hermeneutics deals with the problem of how a word or event in a past time and culture can become relevant and meaningful for our own existential experience.<sup>55</sup>

Currently, there are many hermeneutical options for a New Testament interpreter to choose from. We must seek to understand the direction of the various options as we did under the Old Testament definition of hermeneutics. Our intent here will be that of dealing specifically with the variety of definitions offered for a New Testament Hermeneutic, and to give as concise a definition to each without being simplistic.

Although Karl Barth does not represent a current new option for New Testament Hermeneutics, it is common knowledge that his method of approach to the problem of interpretation dominated the theological frontier from 1920

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<sup>55</sup>Braaten, op. cit., p. 131.

up to the present time. Barth's Epistle to the Romans created a stir in theological circles which did not stop for a long period of time. Two reasons given as the cause of this stir are first, that "he challenged the theological specialists by venturing to write a commentary with a different aim from the one usually pursued by those devoted to objective, historical scholarship."<sup>56</sup> Barth was by no means a conservative in the sense that he might reject the Critical-Historical method. But he did contend that theological commentaries are of no value if they do nothing more than recreate the minute detail of the events written about and surrounding the New Testament events. Instead, Barth turned his back on the modern exegetes and devised his Doctrine of the Word of God whose purpose he said was to "let the Apostolic message break with full force upon our age, which in his opinion, needed to hear once again the Gospel message."<sup>57</sup>

The second reason given for Barth causing such a stir among theological circles was that his interpretation

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<sup>56</sup>Frank N. Magill, ed., Masterpieces of Christian Literature (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 894.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 894.

of Romans turned out to be an attack on the nineteenth century voices of liberalism, progressivism, and humanism.

Barth's hermeneutical principle stands very much juxtaposed to any of the current options for a New Testament Hermeneutic found in Bultmann, Ebeling, or Pannenberg. Barth says that knowledge of God is totally dependent upon God and not dependent upon our quest for a knowledge of God. Man cannot find God, but must be found by Him.<sup>58</sup> God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ who is Incarnate Word which assumes the form of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. His methodology of dogmatics is the process by which the Church tests the content of its proclamation by the standard of the Word of God. The church seeks dogma within the dogmas (i.e., scriptures).<sup>59</sup>

Barth's principle of interpretation has ceased to be as influential in our time probably because the hermeneutical task in relationship to the Biblical texts applies the same criterion that would be applied to any subject or object for the purpose of interpretation. Such an emphasis

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<sup>58</sup>Karl Barth, Christ and Adam (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1954).

<sup>59</sup>Magill, op. cit., p. 981.

in hermeneutics today leaves little room for dogmatism as expressed by Barth, but instead turns more to philosophy of history and methodologies by which we might more effectively interpret Biblical material.

Rudolph Bultmann admits that the interpreter approaches the text with preconceived presuppositions. However, he believes that the interpreter should be responsible in more clearly defining these presuppositions. Bultmann's approach to New Testament Hermeneutic is from an historical point of view rather than a dogmatic point. He defines the presupposition at work in historical interpretation as "the interpreter's relationship in his life to the subject which is directly or indirectly expressed in the text."<sup>60</sup> What is gained from a text will be affected by what point of view one holds while approaching a text, says Bultmann. This interest shapes both the question put to the text and the answer received from the text.

Bultmann states his hermeneutical principal as this: "The interpretation of Biblical writings is not subject to conditions different from those applying to all

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<sup>60</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, "The Problem of Hermeneutics," in Westermann, op. cit., p. 238.

other kinds of literature."<sup>61</sup> Here he opts for a more general rather than a specific hermeneutical approach to the New Testament. Bultmann thoroughly emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the preunderstanding which the interpreter brings to the text.

Braaten feels that Bultmann weakens his hermeneutical proposal by his narrow concept of the preunderstanding appropriate to Biblical interpretation. The preunderstanding of human existence which is appropriate for Biblical interpretation is that which creates the division among those who offer hermeneutical options.

Bultmann's view tends to reduce the task of interpretation to that of existential interpretation "which looks only for the understanding of existence reflected in the text."<sup>62</sup> The possibility of the text speaking to us is then restricted by the fact that the text is only allowed to say what the philosophical preunderstanding allows it to say. The intention of the Biblical text in the New Testament is undermined because of this rigid system of approach. Bultmann seems to decide ahead of viewing the message of

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 256.

<sup>62</sup>Braaten, op. cit., p. 136.

the text what understanding of human existence could come from the text. This a priori decision concerning the text, limits the text's intention. The very nature of the content of Biblical texts indicates clearly that existential interpretation is not the intention of each text. Some are concerned with how God works in relationship to man and the responsibility of man in relationship to God and other people.

What is being said here is that we cannot fully hear the message of the New Testament by rigidly applying the principles inherent in an existentialist philosophy and the critical historical method of research. The function of a New Testament Hermeneutic should be that of elaborating the inherent intention of the text rather than suppressing that intention by way of a preunderstanding of an interpreter. Dogmatics has been criticized in the past for placing an interpretive straight-jacket on the Biblical material. Contemporary hermeneutics must be aware not to perform the same function that dogmatics has in the past.

Gerhard Ebeling<sup>63</sup> is a Bultmannian who seeks to go beyond Bultmann. Hermeneutics is indispensable for Ebeling

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<sup>63</sup>Robinson & Cobb, op. cit.

when trying to work out a theology of the Word of God.

Ebeling has introduced us to the "word-event" concept which is most adequately summarized in these words:

Hermeneutics is defined (by Ebeling) as the theory of understanding the movement of the Word of God from the Biblical text to the proclamation in the present time. Preaching today is the goal of exegesis and hermeneutical reflection. The oral character of the Word is decisive. The Word is an 'acoustical event.' This aspect of the Word became frozen in Protestant orthodoxy as its doctrine of verbal inspiration equated the Word with the words of the Bible. For Ebeling, hermeneutics as a theory of understanding must really be a theory about language, for understanding is not merely reflection about words, but happens as an event through words. Hermeneutics is to make understanding through language an event. Therefore, it is indispensable to theology and preaching, for the gospel is a word event.<sup>64</sup>

Here we have a method which is uniquely theological in nature. This theological form of hermeneutics sees God's word being revealed again and again in human language. The sermon represents a verbal occurrence of the Word of God as the preacher reflects on the text at hand and verbally brings that Word to bear again on human beings.

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<sup>64</sup>Braaten, op. cit., pp. 137-138.



The shift represented here is obviously away from Bultmann. The movement is away from an existential view of the text to that of understanding the linguistic event.

The emphasis on the linguistic as a basis for a hermeneutic has taken to sub-directions: (1) a New Quest of the Historical Jesus;<sup>65</sup> and (2) a movement into the future in search of a new language for Bonhoeffer's "world come of age."<sup>66</sup> The decision must be made at this point whether the old linguistic concepts are accessible for our current understanding or if we will need to construct a whole new language for understanding concepts which are clothed in ancient language forms.

The main problem perceived here with this direction in hermeneutics is the fact that history seems to be moved aside while the subject of language dominates the scene. This hermeneutic certainly can help us with portions of scripture in the New Testament, but can certainly not help us with those historical events such as crucifixion and resurrection which play a central part in Christian

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<sup>65</sup>James M. Robinson, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus (London: SCM Press, 1959).

<sup>66</sup>Ebeling, Word and Faith, p. 98.

theology. So much of the New Testament faith expressed in Paul is totally dependent upon the actual occurrence of certain historical events (I Corinthians 15). The fact that Ebeling perceives language as bridging the gap between us Christians and our "unique historical origin" sounds as if he places the historical problem into the forefront. But upon a thorough look at his work it will be discovered that he does not adequately deal with the historical problems which center around the resurrection and activities of Jesus. The relationship between language and history is left unclear. The problem of bridging the gap between first century events and contemporary man is more than a problem of linguistics.

Heinrich Ott<sup>67</sup> was a disciple of Barth and today occupies Barth's chair in theology at the University of Basel in Switzerland. Ott attempts to create a synthesis between Barth and Bultmann but in the end definitely identifies with Bultmann. Ott sees Barth's chief contribution as that of focusing on the Word of God as dogmatics and thereby creating a test for contemporary preaching.

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<sup>67</sup>James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb Jr. (eds.) The Later Heidegger and Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

However, he says that Bultmann is right in insisting that dogmatics must be hermeneutically oriented. Hermeneutic is imperative for establishing the "truth" of God's Word; for understanding this Word; and for creating better understanding of God's Word through preaching.<sup>68</sup>

In his essay on What is Systematic Theology?, Ott considers the possibility for genuine preaching today. Genuine preaching is for him preaching which bridges the gulf between the message of the Biblical texts and our own culture today. Ott contends that there is a hermeneutical arch which extends from the Biblical text to our present situation.<sup>69</sup> His synthesis of Barth and Bultmann is expressed by saying that between the text and the sermon stands dogmatics. All three---the text, the sermon and dogmatics---constitute the hermeneutical arch.

This "arch" concept takes on an almost mystical nature as it is expressed in Martin Heidegger who has greatly influenced Ott:

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<sup>68</sup> Heinrich Ott, Theology and Preaching (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965).

<sup>69</sup> Heinrich Ott, "What is Systematic Theology?" in Robinson and Cobb, The Later Heidegger and Theology.

Every great poet composed from only a single poem . . . The poem of a poet remains unspoken. None of the individual poems, not even the total of them, says it all. Nevertheless, each poem speaks from the whole of the one poem and each time speaks it. Out of the poem's realm flows forth the wave that, in each case arouses speaking as a poetic utterance.<sup>70</sup>

Ott maintains that Heidegger aids him in describing the hermeneutical arch which he proposes. Such a philosophy is imperative in order for the preacher to be able to relate an understanding of the Biblical material to contemporary man, says Ott.

Braaten was right when he said that Ott at this point has "stretched his Barthian loyalty to the breaking point."<sup>71</sup> Ott comes much closer to Bultmann's existential preunderstanding than to Barth's concept of dogmatics. Ott emphasizes the problem involved in allowing the philosophical presuppositions to determine the content of Biblical hermeneutics, but goes on to formulate his hermeneutical "arch" with the aid of Heidegger's philosophical concepts.

Ott contends that he walks a tight-rope between Barth and Bultmann, but in the end he clearly defines his position in a way which would not allow him to be

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>71</sup>Braaten, op. cit., p. 142.

identified with Barth's concept of dogmatics. In other words, his attempt to synthesize Barth and Bultmann is not convincing. Ott clearly ends up closer to Bultmann than any option that will be examined here.

Wolfhart Pannenberg is currently leading a "revolt" against theologies of the Kerygma epitomized in Barth and Bultmann.<sup>72</sup> Pannenberg contends that "Kerygma without history is a meaningless noise."<sup>73</sup> Preaching the Word of God is impossible if we are cut off from what occurred in history. Pannenberg believes that faith cannot exist apart from the knowledge of what really happened. Hence, the Kerygma for Pannenberg is the "declaration of what God has really done in the actual course of events out in the open where men and nations live and move."<sup>74</sup>

Pannenberg contends that the past generations of theologians has created a dualism by placing revelation in the sphere of faith and placing history in the hands of the critical historical research. For Pannenberg, the

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<sup>72</sup>James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr. (eds.) Theology as History (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

<sup>73</sup>Bratten, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

connection between revelation and history is this: "Revelation comes not merely in or through history but as history."<sup>75</sup> Normally, we approach Barth and Bultmann as representing polarities in theology, but Pannenberg places them on common ground because of their common error; they both see the critical-historical method as not "leaving any more room for redemptive events."<sup>76</sup> Out of this fear, Barth developed his "Pre-history" and Bultmann emphasized the "historicity of the individual" as escapes from the snare of the critical-historical method of investigation.

Pannenberg replies that redemptive events must be asserted in a discussion with the theology of existence, with the theology of redemptive history along with the work of the critical-historical method.<sup>77</sup>

Pannenberg's Doctrine of Revelation is summarized in seven theses:

1. God's Self-revelation, according to the Biblical witnesses, did not take place directly, e.g., as a theophany, but rather indirectly, through God's acts in history.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>77</sup> Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," in Westermann, op. cit., pp. 314, 315.

2. The revelation does not take place at the beginning but rather at the end of revelatory history.
3. In distinction to special appearances of the deity, the revelation in history is open to everyone who has eyes to see. It has universal character.
4. The universal revelation of God's deity is not yet actualized in Israel's history, but rather first in what happened to Jesus of Nazareth, in that there the end of all occurrence took place proleptically.
5. The Christ event does not, as an isolated occurrence, reveal the deity of Israel's God, but only to the extent that it is a part of God's history with Israel.
6. The development of non-Jewish concepts of revelation in the gentile Christian Churches brings to expression the universality of God's eschatological self-demonstration in what happened to Jesus.
7. The "word" is related to revelation as prediction, guidance and report.<sup>78</sup>

Pannenberg's real departure from Barth and Bultmann is in his acknowledgement of the "universal historical scope of revelation." He also asserts in opposition to Barth and Bultmann that Revelation is not a point of departure but is that which lies at the end of a long journey which began with inadequate knowledge of God.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Robinson & Cobb, Theology as History, p. 118.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

Pannenberg says that it is ridiculous to try to make a distinction between "salvation history" and "world history." He acknowledges the God of the Bible as the Lord over all nations and not just the tribe of the Israelites. Again, this points out a basic departure especially from Bultmann.

Pannenberg is willing to place his dogmatics at the mercy of historical research. He feels that the historical method must not be thought of as synonymous with positivism or naturalism. Pannenberg maintains that what has scared most systematicians away from the historical method has been their fear of its out-dated positivistic view of the method. Barth backed off to hold tight to the traditional dogma of the church whereas Bultmann laid complete confidence in man's existential decisions.<sup>80</sup>

Pannenberg rejects the idea that faith of necessity is opposed to rationalism. Pannenberg insists that the only way one can be a Christian is on the grounds of reason. This is obviously juxtaposed to the theology both of Barth and Bultmann. For their disciples, this issue has

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<sup>80</sup>Braaten, op. cit., p. 43.



almost become more offensive than Pannenberg's ideas on the Resurrection. For Bultmann, basing faith on reason implied giving up such things as the miracles of Jesus and the Virgin Birth. This is not the case with Pannenberg. Instead, he builds his entire theology around the resurrection. Pannenberg believes that faith which builds statements upon itself with no obligation to history cannot be distinguished from illusion.<sup>81</sup>

The preceding background on Pannenberg's theology is necessary in order to understand his hermeneutical principle which he calls a "theology of World History." History as the key to hermeneutics does not find much company among current theologians. Pannenberg agrees with the definition of New Testament Hermeneutics in this dissertation when he says, the hermeneutical problem is the gulf which exists between the world thought in Bible times and that of our time. He insists that the fallacy of current hermeneutical endeavors is that there is movement only between the past text and the modern interpreter. Pannenberg's proposal consisting of a concept of universal

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<sup>81</sup>Robinson & Cobb, Theology as History, p. 128 ff.

history goes back behind the text and considers what gave rise to the event which includes the writer's world view. Pannenberg claims that this method makes a detour: by going behind the text a bridge is built to contemporary time for the interpreter.<sup>82</sup>

The historical process Pannenberg proposes is that which bridges historical events of the New Testament to the "horizon" of the contemporary investigator. Pannenberg says that the hermeneutical gap is bridged by the continuing plan of God as it is unfolded in history. Hence, the church cannot claim a finality of God's activity through the scriptural tradition.

Thus the present situation may be related to that of early Christianity in terms of that horizon which alone connects both without blurring their differences, namely, the horizon of the historical process. The hermeneutical difference between the traditional texts and our present time would be at once respected and superseded in a concept of the history connecting both, if this history can again be regarded as the work of the Biblical God.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg (et al.) History and Hermeneutic (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 3.

<sup>83</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Crisis of the Scripture-Principle in Protestant Theology," Dialog, II (1963), 312.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HERMENEUTICS AND METHODOLOGY

Hermeneutic can be viewed from two perspectives: from the standpoint of mediation or of methodology. Under the first perspective, hermeneutic would be defined as mediating understanding through language. On the other hand, there is the possibility of understanding hermeneutic from the standpoint of methodology. Such an understanding asserts that hermeneutic is the scientific evaluation of the methods and principles for understanding.<sup>84</sup>

The question we must now confront is this: Is hermeneutic interpretation or methodology? How are the two related? Knierim has stated that the answer is clear: "Hermeneutic is interpretation but presupposes or implies a methodology. For the results of the interpreter are dependent on the methodology." To exemplify this relationship in more specific terms, Knierim has said,

The methods of interpretation depend on the kind of confrontation between interpreter and that which is to be interpreted. This means that not only the actual interpretation but also the methodology for such an interpretation must be a specific one. It must be

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<sup>84</sup>Knierim, op. cit.

developed out of the specific confrontation between subject and interpreter.<sup>85</sup>

Methodology, then, refers to the specific procedure which an interpreter formulates as he confronts himself with the subject to be interpreted. Methodology is not interpretation, but makes interpretation possible.

It was stated previously that a specific problem or subject demands a specific methodology. A methodology cannot be worked out in advance. For example, the Old Testament demands a specific methodology in order for it to be interpreted. But, that method can only be formalized as the interpreter confronts the specific text to be interpreted.

After developing a methodology, the interpreter is then called upon to establish the intention of the text and then to establish a dialogue between that intention and our current situation. This dialogue is imperative if the Biblical material is to be considered authoritative. Contrary to some current fundamentalist concepts, the Bible does not say anything in and of itself. The Bible is a human book which reports about divine activity. Only as we

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

enter into dialogue with the Biblical material and place its meaning into our own secular terms can we claim that the Bible has any authority. We then claim authority for the Biblical material after interpretation by saying that it has meaning for me. Knierim is right in saying that ONLY through exegesis of individual passages of scripture can the Biblical material have any authority for us. If faith is a response to an actual challenge of God in a particular circumstance, it follows then that only through a methodology built upon confrontation with individual texts are we able to come to a faith grounded in the Yahweh of the Old Testament and the God revealed through Jesus Christ.

At this juncture we approach the basic concern of this dissertation: examining the methodologies which are currently offered as a means of coming closer to the intention of a text that an integral interpretation might be related to people through the medium of the sermon. The methodology and hermeneutical principle of four current methodological options will be examined followed by a critique, both positively and negatively of that method.

## CHAPTER II

### A DESCRIPTION AND COMPARISON OF CURRENT METHODOLOGIES

#### H. GRADY DAVIS - Design for Preaching

Davis' intention in writing a book about preaching was not "to present a particular method of sermon construction."<sup>1</sup> However, he admits that every sermon writer shows forth a methodology whether he wants to or not. For Davis, that methodology would need to be worked out as the preacher confronts a particular text.

Davis' book represents an attempt to create a synthesis between the two emphases in the area of preaching: form and content. Davis has observed that studies about preaching consist in the "traditional study of homiletical forms as forms."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, he observes that some critics of preaching advocate "a preoccupation with the vital content of preaching apart from the forms it takes."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>H. Grady Davis, Design For Preaching (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), p. vi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. v.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. v, vi.

Davis says that what is needed among contemporary Biblical preachers is "a sharper awareness that content and form are two inseparable elements of the same thing in the design of the sermon."<sup>4</sup> Hence, when Davis talks about "design" he is referring to this synthesis between form and content which has been mistakenly polarized in the minds of some teachers of preaching.

Design For Preaching was written in 1958, a period in America which felt a thrust toward Biblical preaching. Earlier, we established that this movement remains in progress at the present time. Davis saw the need to create a synthesis between the polarities labeled "form" and "content" after examining the sermons of that period.

This book comes to us, then, not proposing a methodology or of writing in the "how-to-preach" tradition, but is offered as providing "a basis for discrimination, which can be used with any sound method of working."<sup>5</sup>

Davis argues that the effective communication of content is dependent upon the form. "Life appears in the union of substance and form. These are the elements. To

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. vi.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

be without form is the void of matter and it is the void of thought."<sup>6</sup> Whether consciously or not, the content of our messages do take some form either organized or chaotic. The difference between chaotic and organized content is the difference between chaotic form and organized form. Form makes all the difference in the communication of substance as is seen in the timing and form necessary for a good joke, says Davis.

Davis' main point in the first part of his first chapter is that thought, substance, and content are not communicated effectively nor give a feeling of finality until they are stated in good form.

Form must be a primary concern for the preacher, says Davis, for the following reasons: first, the "aim of preaching is to win from men a response to the gospel, a response of attitude and impulse and feeling no less than of thought."<sup>7</sup> Logic works on the intellectual plain while the form is that which penetrates to the feeling level. Both are necessary for a response to the gospel.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 5.



Secondly, people who come to hear the Word we impart are exceedingly complex in nature and, hence, need to be confronted in a way which strikes the variety of levels of man's complexity.

Thirdly, form in preaching should be a major concern because of the nature of the Biblical material itself. Davis insists that to concentrate on form alone directs us towards self-interest. The Biblical material directs us toward "Another." The Biblical text leads us to quest after the center of our existence, something we could never gain through guessing or accident.

The distinction between form and content must be maintained by looking to two large aspects of preaching: (1) intellectual argument and (2) appeals to self-interest. These are matters of form and cannot be identified with the content of the gospel. Today, much of our preaching suffers because it has substituted the content of the gospel with these two aspects of preaching in order to maintain popular appeal.<sup>8</sup>

Two important points in Davis agree with what was stated in the first chapter of this dissertation about

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

respecting the intention of a Biblical text. He says (1) that the form for each sermon should be a result of the content which is to be transmitted and (2) that when form is rightly used, it takes the shape of the content which is to be transmitted and, hence, the form cannot be distinguished from the content.

The danger of thinking in terms of form is that it is often used for its own sake. However, he stresses the fact that we have too much emphasis on form and not enough on content, that the preacher must be a wise craftsman as well as a technician.

Davis redefines topical preaching in a way which is reasonably acceptable to those concerned about Biblical preaching. Traditionally, we in America have thought of topical preaching as being that which begins with an idea unrelated to the intention of a Biblical text and working that subject or topic out in a form which is appealing to modern man.

The definition for topical preaching which Davis offers is precisely what has been cited by Rolf Knierim as

the concept of topical preaching in Germany.<sup>9</sup> Davis says that topical preaching has two aspects: (1) nothing but the sermon topic or central idea is derived from the text; and (2) the idea, once derived, is then developed independently without drawing further on the text. Davis says that a sermon is not necessarily unbiblical because it has no text quoted throughout. The text can become transparent so that the original intention is maintained without relating the historical incident through which we received that truth. For example, when Jesus talks about the return of the evil spirit in Matthew 12: 43-45, his main point is not a lesson in how evil spirits operate but is a story which points to the uncertainty of human existence. The demonology merely becomes a vehicle by which he illustrates a truth about life. The process involved in exegeting and interpreting this passage will be illustrated in the following chapter of this dissertation.

To further support his basic thesis, Davis points to the technical process of preaching in the New Testament. "Preaching in its technical New Testament sense includes

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<sup>9</sup> Statement by Rolf Knierim, personal interview, January, 1970.

the substance communicated. A man does not merely 'preach.' He preaches the king's message. Preaching has no existence apart from the thing to be preached."<sup>10</sup> In New Testament terms, then, a man preaches the gospel, God's good news. The content of preaching is thereby identified as "the gospel." Davis seeks to be descriptive of the task and not definitive in regard to the actual content of the kerygma. He again leaves the job of defining the kerygma to the work of systematic and Biblical theology.

The remainder of Davis' book is devoted to form, writing, the hearer and other related topics. The book is mainly one which deals with the proper form for the sermon today. What makes this a new book (in 1958) is that it admits that the object of good form is to relate effectively the intention of the Biblical passages. This is the main principle advanced by Davis. However, he does not provide a methodology by which to get at the substance to be preached.

With these main ideas of Davis in mind, we shall evaluate them both positively and negatively.

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<sup>10</sup>Davis, op. cit., p. 108.

Positive Evaluation.

The first positive contribution of Davis is his insistence that theology and preaching need to get together. He admits that the preaching of the recent decades has implied that form should be the main concern for the preacher. Davis says that form and content are inseparable and that form should be the servant of content and not the reverse.

Second, Davis has rightfully pointed to the pitfall of topical preaching in America. This method of preaching which centers on form over and against content, has allowed preaching to move toward self-interest and egotism. This type of personal concern alone is epitomized in the preaching of Norman Vincent Peale. Such an over-abundance of self-interest accented with "cheap grace" cannot be perpetuated through the sermon when faithfully representing the intention of the Biblical passages. The Biblical material points to "Another" says Davis, and, hence, leads our ultimate concern away from self-interest to concern in what God would have us do in response to His love as shown through Christ.

Third, Davis admits that form must take a subordinate position in relationship to content if either must occupy a subordinate role at all. When form is properly understood, it should more effectively relate that intent which is contained in the Biblical message to contemporary man. Hence, transparency of form in order to relate the content of Biblical material is a key factor for Davis and if taken seriously could contribute much to the current preaching scene.

#### Negative Evaluation.

In criticism of Davis, I point first of all to his basic declaration that there needs to be a closer relationship between form and content in the sermon. After making this important point, the remainder of his first chapter and actually the remainder of the book really deals with the subject of form. The problem is that after Davis admits that form and content need to come together, he goes on only to talk about form and does not show programmatically how this marriage can and must take place. The crucial need for Davis, and for those talking about preaching, is that they not only admit to this need but

demonstrate the process involved in the principle of bringing form and content together. K. Morgan Edwards has actively worked on this problem. Edwards teaches only one class in preaching by himself. This class deals mainly with technique and style. In other classes, he teaches in a co-relationship with men from Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, Church History, Ethics and other fields in order that both form and content are properly evaluated within the students' sermons.

Secondly, we must ask this question: after Davis admits to the pressing need in the area of preaching for form and content to be merged together, how does he demonstrate this process? Simply stated, Davis is very weak in demonstrating the method he proposes. He maintains that theology and exegesis are presupposed before confronting his book, but he himself does not show a basic understanding of the relationship between a methodology for Biblical exegesis of texts or the need to put it into proper form for the sermon. The illustrations which are given by Davis (p. 45-49), in my opinion, allow his emphasis on form to overpower the intention of the texts. In other words, Davis' basic thesis is right, but in demonstrating that

thesis, he ends up creating some of the same mistakes which he preached against earlier in his book.

Thirdly, the procedure which Davis advocates when talking about expanding thoughts for a sermon is that the preacher should come up with a good idea and eventually find a landing spot for that thought in a Biblical text. This procedure points to one of the main weaknesses of our past generation of preaching. The ineffectiveness of this approach is apparent in the weak preaching which we find in the church today.

Fourthly, the illustrations of good preaching which Davis uses in the book come out of the topical era of preaching in America where the mistake illustrated in my third point is clearly perceived. Perhaps the only illustrations which Davis had to draw upon were from the topical method, but that is no excuse for them not showing the importance of exegesis and theology which Davis himself says a sermon should articulate.

Finally, Davis should have dealt more adequately with the problem and necessity of having a Biblical methodology and hermeneutic as a foundation for preaching. His admitting to the fact that Biblical exegesis and theology



are needed is of little help when seeing the problem which arises from his illustrations of good sermons. This makes me conclude that it is virtually impossible to talk about "theology and exegesis which is presupposed" without demonstrating what is meant by those terms and the results they are to engender in the sermon.

Davis' book is basically a good book about form as it relates to the sermon. He talks about how we might more effectively relate the conclusions drawn from our Biblical interpretation through the sermon. We have established earlier that Biblical interpretation presupposes a methodology by which the interpreter can arrive at that interpretation. The choice of an appropriate methodology for more effective preaching still remains the prime concern in this dissertation. Davis' only contribution to the task has been in showing how to formulate the findings of a methodology which we choose for a sermon, rather than directing us toward a methodology for Biblical interpretation and preaching.

DWIGHT E. STEVENSON - In The Biblical  
Preacher's Workshop

I have chosen Stevenson's methodology for examination for the following reasons: (1) because he goes beyond H. Grady Davis by attempting to deal specifically with the principles of hermeneutics and theology; (2) because his book is currently the only book in English which deals with the problem of preaching in light of the present thrust toward Biblical preaching; and (3) because Stevenson is the pivotal authority on preaching in my own denomination (Disciples of Christ).

Stevenson's book is divided into two parts: I Design and II Production. The first deals with hermeneutics, theology and principles of exegesis. The second part deals with examples of his method in practice. We shall here be concerned with the first part of his book where he offers the principles of a methodology for Biblical interpretation.

Stevenson says that a thrust toward Biblical preaching means that we are confronted by some traditional questions which still go unanswered or at least are not agreed upon. One such question which he centers upon is

that of the relationship between Bible and Word of God. A 19th Century concept that the Bible and the Word of God are synonymous is more 20th Century thought in the minds of laymen and clergy than we think. The breakdown of this inadequate concept has led to other more adequate statements concerning this relationship. Stevenson cites one statement which he identifies with: "It is agreed that there is a Word from God. We are also agreed that this Word is mediated by the Bible but is not coextensive with or identifiable with the Books of the Bible."<sup>11</sup>

Stevenson asks the question, "why preach from the Bible?" To this, he lists seven inadequate answers which have been suggested. Then, he offers some thoughts which move us "toward an adequate answer." Stevenson suggests that the Bible stands "as a vehicle to salvation." This salvation is understood largely in the language of analogy. From here, Stevenson examines several of the important analogies of the New Testament in order to make a case for the use of the Bible in contemporary preaching.

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<sup>11</sup>Biblical Interpretation (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), pp. 18-19.

An argument is made in Stevenson's third chapter for the use of Biblical criticism. He applies Socrates dictum, "the uncriticized life is not worthy to be lived by man," as illustrative of the need for Biblical criticism.

Stevenson does not say outright, but his writings show that he has been greatly influenced by Gerhard Ebeling's concept of the Word as "word-event." He rejects any type of general revelation and insists that the Word of God (i.e., Deed of God) is a personal word which comes fresh to each man in a face-to-face meeting. Stevenson identifies strongly with one of the four options which we have examined for New Testament interpretation in the person of Fuchs and Ebeling.

Stevenson's fourth chapter, "The Minister as Biblical Student," is where he offers us a methodology for Biblical preaching. He mentions earlier in his book the problem of the separation between scholarship and preaching. He sights Barth's Commentary on Romans as the beginning point in getting scholarship and preaching back together.

The methodology offered is not presented in absolute terms. Stevenson feels that the method offered may be good for some preachers and may be disaster for others. He

argues for its effectiveness on the basis of the welcome it has received from seminary students.

The first step in the methodology is in the area of choosing the text. Here, the whole issue of length of text and type of text must be decided. The division created between textual and expository has been a matter of length of passage and nothing else. This distinction should be discarded. That the text, whether long or short, is a unit is the important thing, says Stevenson. The main point of the text should be that which stands at the center of Biblical theology and not on the periphery.

The second step is that of placing the text in context. This means essentially that the exegete will confront the point scored in the text with his knowledge of Old Testament religion, New Testament theology, teachings of Jesus and Church History. The who, what, where, when and why questions should be raised in relationship to the text. The preacher should be able to fit this main point to be preached into the total message and outline of the book. Stevenson himself has done the work of outlining books of the Bible in his two volumes on preaching from the

Old Testament and New Testament.<sup>12</sup> To emphasize this point, Stevenson says that a person cannot deal with I Corinthians 13 without seeing it in relationship to chapters 12 and 14. These three are a unit and should be read with that in mind.

The third step proposed is that of spelling out the meaning of the text. This includes identifying what type of text it is (prophecy, poetry, epistle, gospel, etc.). Then one should go on from here to apply a specific form of hermeneutics on the text. Those principles applied will control the type of interpretation gathered, says Stevenson.

Stevenson insists that the main topic of concern in the Biblical passage is not that of one single personality, but that of persons relationship to God. This fact should be incorporated as part of the hermeneutical principle.

Canonical problems should be considered as one chooses which text to use. A word by word analysis should

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<sup>12</sup>Dwight E. Stevenson, Preaching on the Books of the Old Testament (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961).  
Preaching on the Books of the New Testament (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956).

be made of the text. This is performed through commentaries and lexicons.

The fourth step in Stevenson's methodology is that of putting yourself into the text. He agrees with Bultmann who says that "the hearing of the word of the Bible can take place only in personal decision." Unless the exegete believes in what is said and that it has a relevant word for today, he cannot preach persuasively from the text. Stevenson says that we need to move beyond the "knower-object" relationship to the text and move to the level of preaching from the text as it grasps hold of his life. This type of confrontation presupposes academic disciplines, but is the necessary step beyond them. Effective relating of the message of a text presupposes that the preacher believes what is said and believes that it is important for everyone to respond to that Word.

The fifth step is that of seeking the internal unity of the text. With short passages, this unity is not difficult to establish. But Stevenson advocates long passages and maintains that finding unity in lengthy passages is difficult work. To aid in this task, Stevenson suggests seeking three things: (1) the proposition; (2) the aim;

and (3) a key verse, if there is one. Proposition means boiling down a declarative main point if there is one. Aim means the object of the text---what the writer intends to accomplish. A key verse, if there is one, has the "virtue of stating the proposition of the passage and of the sermon in Biblical language."

The sixth step is that of uncovering the dynamics of the text. This is a probing for the movement of the text. Dynamics implies that the preacher look into the life and culture out of which the text comes in order to re-create its essence.

The seventh and final step in the exegetical process is that of writing a precis (pray'-see) of the text. This statement attempts to maintain the intention of the text, but state that intention as explicitly as possible. This process is actually one of writing the intention or "point scored" in the text in one's own words.

These seven steps set <sup>forth</sup> by Stevenson are in the area of hermeneutics but do not embrace all of hermeneutics. The process described is the task which must be assumed by the preacher as Biblical student before he can go on to the task of sermon writing.



Now we shall move to the task of criticizing the ideas that have been advanced by Stevenson.

Positive Evaluation.

The greatest contribution of Stevenson is his insistence upon getting scholarship and preaching together and his attempt at demonstrating how this marriage can take place.

Earlier we discussed the necessity for establishing the principle of using the Bible as a basis for preaching. We have said that this new thrust is imperative and stated why. The argument for the necessity of Biblical preaching dealt on the principle level and did not demonstrate how that principle can be brought into reality. Stevenson makes a basic premise about Biblical preaching and then seeks to argue for an adequate methodology for carrying out the basic premise. This is a welcome contribution, especially from a teacher of preaching.

Stevenson's second contribution is in the area of arguing for the proper use of Biblical criticism. This is an important argument to be heeded by those who have so long embedded themselves in topical preaching and also for

those of the Disciples of Christ movement who have too long maintained a naive approach to the scriptures.

A third important feature of Stevenson's book is his argument for establishing a methodology for preaching. We have seen that Davis does not consider his book to be one which proposes a method for preaching but concentrates instead on the subject of form as it relates to the problem of content. Stevenson moves one step beyond Davis in providing a methodology for Biblical preaching.

A fourth significant contribution of Stevenson's is that he does not allow his methodology to hinder the inherent meaning of the text. In essence, he says that the text should not be molded to the method but the method to the text. He admits that parts of the methodology may not fit a particular text or a particular person. At that point, the text must dictate what methodology will be most suitable.

Stevenson's book is actually the only work in English which works at providing a methodology for Biblical preaching during a period when preachers are finding a need for guidance. After admitting to the necessity of Biblical preaching, we need someone to show us how this method is

devised in relationship to the best Biblical scholarship available. Stevenson has helped us more than any other American preacher on this problem.

#### Negative Evaluation.

My first criticism of Stevenson's book has to do with the choice of terms he makes when talking about the necessity of Biblical preaching. He talks about the Bible being the "vehicle of salvation." For me, this is a statement which needs careful evaluation. First of all, there are the what, when, and why questions which are currently applied to the word "salvation" which leaves it little, if any, apparent content for contemporary man. Secondly, "salvation" has the connotation today of escape from what is, from reality. In a time when men are being persuaded to be responsible agents for social change and the humanization of society, salvation often has the connotation of escape from such responsibility. Along with this, many persons are identifying technology as the only agent of salvation when confronted with the over-population and hunger problem. The criticism raised here is that salvation does not appear to be an adequate descriptive word

when trying to describe the function of the Biblical message. I recognize that anyone who tries to describe the importance of anything in one sentence runs the risk of being simplistic. I feel that a more adequate definition than Stevenson's might be in terms of the power of the Word contained in the Biblical witness to persuade humanity toward some sense of self-transcendence over what is, while still remaining responsible agents for effective change for the better in the present with the hope for a better future. My statement may present as many problems as Stevenson's. My main point here is that he needs a better descriptive word than "salvation" when talking about the function of Biblical material in relationship to contemporary man.

My second major criticism of Stevenson is his failure to give an adequate perspective in the area of New Testament hermeneutics. Stevenson argues that his chapter on methodology shows the move away from homiletics to hermeneutics. But, the only contemporary man whom he cites is that of Gerhard Ebeling. Ebeling represents only one New Testament hermeneutical option for the exegete. I am wondering here what effect the New Testament hermeneutical

ideas of Barth, Bultmann, Pannenberg and Fuchs might have on Stevenson's methodology as found in Ebeling. My main objection here is that Ebeling appeared to be the only New Testament hermeneutical option available for the contemporary preacher. This is clearly not the case.

A third weakness perceived in Stevenson's method is that he laid no claim on any part of his methodology as being imperative. He said that the methodology might need to be thrown out in accordance with the personal style of a particular preacher. Some elements of his methodology are items which cannot be neglected if the preacher desires adequately to transmit the intention of a text to a congregation. Stevenson should have stated this fact in explicit terms and should have identified those elements which cannot be discarded in the exegetical process.

Fourthly, Stevenson dwells on certain steps which are obvious, such as "choosing a text." On the other hand, he states other complex matters with the assumption that his definition of terms is perfectly clear to the reader. He says that spelling out the meaning of the text is the work of exegesis. Then, he completely leaves undone the question concerning what knowledge of exegesis,

hermeneutics, church history, and ethics are presupposed in being able to do the "work of exegesis." Stating a principle is much different from talking about how to sharpen abilities in certain fields which relate to exegesis. Stevenson should have centered more thoroughly on this problem.

My final criticism is actually more of a descriptive statement than a criticism. All of Stevenson's seven steps together represent only one step in a comprehensive exegetical process. The question of relating an Old Testament text to the New Testament and vice versa was not discussed; the question of relating the text to church history, ethics, systematic theology and current problems was not discussed. These also are essential steps on the exegetical road which lead to an adequate sermon.

These criticisms presuppose that there is a better methodology that will be pointed to in this dissertation. In moving in that direction, we will examine the unpublished work of K. Morgan Edwards who is another teacher of preaching concerned about bringing an emphasis on content as well as form into our preaching classes today.

K. MORGAN EDWARDS - Essentials of the Word

Edwards proposes that three elements should be present in every sermon. These elements are (1) Grace, the dominant note in preaching; (2) Judgment, the complement to Grace; and (3) Obedience, the consequence of Grace. He seeks to establish these as essential elements by tracing "the essentials which were present at several periods in the history of the church when preaching exerted an immense influence on the lives of the listeners."<sup>13</sup>

A distinguishing mark of Edwards' work is that he, a teacher of preaching, sets forth a book about "the essence of the message rather than about the form of the sermon." Davis' book talked about centering on content but in the last analysis contributes more concerning form and its inter-relationship to content. Stevenson talks about the need for Biblical preaching and then shows what exegetical method aids this process. Edwards now makes a contribution in this movement toward emphasizing content rather than form by making a systematic theological statement

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<sup>13</sup>K. Morgan Edwards, "Essentials of the Word" (unpublished manuscript, The School of Theology at Claremont, California, 1969), p. 2.

about the essentials of the New Testament which for him should also be essential elements of every sermon which claims to be Christian.

A methodology is not a good term to apply to Edwards' book. No view to a programmatic preaching method or technique is proposed. Instead, Edwards is saying that the content of a sermon is important and in order for a sermon to relate faithfully the essence of the New Testament message, it must contain the elements of grace, judgment and obedience.

The essentials which Edwards cites are treated separately in his book. However, he makes it emphatically clear that each element must be seen in relationship to the other elements in the sermon. Grace without judgment is cheap grace. Judgment without grace is a judgmental act. Obedience cannot be called for except as an appropriate response to the grace of God. Grace, judgment and obedience are thoroughly inter-related but must be treated separately before seeing their inter-relationship.

Grace is identified as the "dominant note in preaching." Edwards seeks to establish this proposition through (1) examining the meaning of the word in the



Biblical tradition, (2) by examining the problem of talking about grace in a parish setting, (3) by examining the alternatives to preaching grace, (4) by entertaining the question concerning the necessity of preaching grace, and (5) by looking at the three-fold substance of the message of grace.<sup>14</sup>

If Edwards is forced to identify one element in the essentials over the others, he chooses grace as being that which of necessity must be the "overwhelming emphasis." The problem arises concerning how grace can be preached without becoming sentimental psychotherapy. But the primary reason for the lack of grace in a sermon is on account of human nature which finds it very easy to be negative, critical and judgmental. The insecurity of the preacher adds an additional dimension to the problem of preaching grace over and against judgment.

"Cheap grace" or "unworthy substitutes for grace" are first of all inadequate doctrines of atonement. This is the "Jesus-took-care-of-it-all" approach to grace which makes the sacrifice of God in Christ a cheap object to be easily obtained weekly by the self-righteous. Secondly,

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

grace is misrepresented by the appeal to the worshipper to help himself. Thirdly, we must seek an understanding of God in his own terms rather than on ours. These inadequate substitutes for preaching God's grace are the result of the gap between theology and preaching, says Edwards.<sup>15</sup>

When talking about judgment, Edwards says that grace is the upperside of a coin whose reverse is judgment. Judgment means two things; (1) demand of the moral law, and (2) the fact that God judges us in the very act of grace. The basic emphasis being that the moral law was not abolished with the writings of the New Testament. Paul's writings clarify the fact that in Christ the law was not abolished but fulfilled. In Galatians 3 we find that the law is fulfilled through the type of love exemplified in Jesus Christ. A second point can be perceived here concerning judgment in the act of grace through two Biblical concepts. The judgment of Christ (Son of Man) upon man is viewed as a present function in the Gospel of John and as a future function of the returning Son of Man in some apocalyptic sayings in the New Testament. Whether present or

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

future, the point is that in Christ, the expression of God's grace, came also judgment upon human activity.

The main point about judgment established by Edwards is that it must be preached if grace is not to be distorted. Judgment must be in genuine confessional terms and preached against the background of God's overwhelming grace.<sup>16</sup>

Obedience is cited as the appropriate response to the grace of God. Both grace and the power for obedience are supplied by God. When we allow the grace of God to dwell within us, his will is done in and through us. Hence, "obedience is the consequence of grace not the accomplishment of the disciple."<sup>17</sup>

One of the most important parts of Edwards' books is where he discusses how ethics can be preached. This is where the question of obedience naturally leads. The question of personal conduct in light of the knowledge of God's grace is the ethical question.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

Edwards formulates three possibilities for preaching ethics as a result of his joint classroom experience with Dr. Joseph Hough, an ethicist and Dean of Graduate studies at the School of Theology at Claremont.

The first way of preaching ethics is to unfold the kerygma. This means a re-enacting of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in such a manner that the listener finds new ways and means to do what he ought. Attention would be given to centering on the justification of the believer in Christ as a source of dealing with social issues. This approach stands over and against that of dynamically confronting the people about the failure of themselves as a church and as citizens of a country who have ignored pressing social problems. Billy Graham appears to do this except that he naively assumes that once a person "accepts Christ" he will automatically involve himself in the work of social righteousness. The simple facts born out by experience show that this just does not occur.

The second way of preaching ethics is that of interpreting social responsibility out of an agape attitude toward persons. Edwards points out that the polarization

of eros and agape is a false one. Eros has been seen as bad and agape as good. Both eros and agape value another and recognize inherent worth in others. The distinction between eros and agape is the egocentricity of eros. "Eros seeks the other person for its own satisfaction and self-fulfillment. Agape values the other person for his inherent worth to himself and to mankind."<sup>18</sup> If this agape attitude is adopted by the believer and specifically applied to his own community then this would directly affect his relationship to the minority and poor people around him. The form of the involvement is a further question. Here it would be sought to establish that a Christian must respond to the needs of those around him.

The third way of preaching ethics is "to risk applying agape love toward persons to specific moral and social issues."<sup>19</sup> This form implies no vague generalization about relating to war, poverty, discrimination, racism and the suppression of people everywhere. At times, certain events require that a clear-cut statement be made concerning these particular needs. No room is allowed for

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

guess work when ethics are preached in this vain. The main problem cited here is that so often when the essence of the New Testament message about poverty is put forth in specific terms for contemporary man, it is more often than not declared out of alignment with the gospel. The false distinction between faith and secular activity is appealed to by people of the church. This concept has no Biblical foundation whatsoever. This third method of preaching ethics dares to define the direct action needed in order to respond out of agape.

Edwards says that judgment preached in the context of the grace of God should be that which leads us all as believers to "personal holiness and social righteousness."<sup>20</sup>

At this juncture, we shall critically examine what Edwards has advanced in this preliminary manuscript of his book.

#### Positive Evaluation.

Edwards, like Stevenson, is saying that preaching must concentrate primarily on content. Edwards goes further

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

than Stevenson in defining the actual nature of that content. By venturing to name grace, judgment and obedience as the essentials of the word and hence essentials for Biblical preaching, Edwards has laid the foundation upon which further discussion can be built as the preaching task moves closer to its responsibility of adequately handling the Biblical message.

Davis and Stevenson said that preaching must be concerned with content but did not specify the essentials in a sermon in light of a new emphasis on content. Edwards now points to three essential elements which are the result of his own examination of the New Testament message and church history. This bold approach in the form of a three-fold summarization of the New Testament message is a great contribution to those who are serious about wrestling with a theology of Biblical preaching.

A second contribution of Edwards has to do with form. He makes it clear that his book is concerned with content and not form. However, in the very process of defining the essential content he presents a form which is stylistically well-balanced for preaching. We are more concerned today about content because form has been

over-emphasized at the expense of content. However, we cannot dismiss the need to present good content through good form. Edwards' own preaching will attest to the fact that the three elements which he names as essentials of the word and for preaching help structure a sermon that is well-balanced in form as well as content.

A third positive element in Edwards' method is that it provides a framework in which both the pastoral and prophetic elements of the minister's work can be manifested at the same time. Drs. Clinebell and Seifert have recently written a book which deals with the problem of how ministers can meet the personal needs of a congregation through calling and counseling and at the same time strike hard and strong on the social evils of our nation and of the world.<sup>21</sup> Clinebell and Seifert say that these tasks are inter-related. They say that the closer the personal relationship between pastor and people, the greater opening he will have for indicting personal sins and social evils. Edwards' methodology clearly exemplifies this principle for the preaching ministry. Once a man is confronted with the

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<sup>21</sup>Howard J. Clinebell and Harvey J. Seifert, Personal Growth and Social Change (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969).



love which God has for him, he must also be shown the judgment that is placed upon man and that obedience in the form of improving self and the social scene is an appropriate response to the love of God. Edwards has shown us the way for combining the pastoral and prophetic through preaching.

### Negative Evaluation.

Edwards' book deals systematically with the question of what should be included in a sermon. After looking at the New Testament as a whole, Edwards says that grace, judgment and obedience are essentials to that New Testament message and hence should be included in every sermon. The problem I would raise here is this: sermons are preached from specific texts whose specific exegesis would not always contain these three elements. If a text contains only one of these three elements and a minister is preaching from that text, how can he preach grace, judgment and obedience if these elements are not all a part of that specific passage? Edwards does not sufficiently deal with this problem.

A second criticism or question relates closely to the first. What criterion dictates that these three

elements must be in every sermon? The answer to this might be that they are essential because these three elements are the essence of the New Testament message. Then why could these three elements not be included in the course of the liturgy in a worship service? In the last analysis, Edwards' insistence that these three elements must be in every sermon tends to be an inductive argument. At such a juncture as this, I question whether or not these essentials are really a matter of necessity for good form or because good content is impossible without them.

A third criticism I would again place in the form of a question: What do you do with the Old Testament after you have devised a systematic approach to the content of preaching based upon the New Testament? The Old Testament is undoubtedly full of each element which Edwards identifies as essentials of the New Testament Word. However, the Old Testament texts contain great variances in the intention of the texts when placed alongside the New Testament. A typological comparison would be imperative for determining the continuity and discontinuity between the messages of the Old and New Testaments. Edwards did not deal at all with this crucial problem of preaching from the Old

Testament in light of his methodology which is solely derived from a New Testament systematic approach.

In the final analysis, I see Edwards' book as a statement of systematic theology. His systematic statement is directed to the preacher who is concerned about presenting an undistorted New Testament gospel to the contemporary church. This book will save many from distorting central elements of the New Testament message as well as pose problems when one preaches from a specific text which is composed solely of only one of the three essentials named by Edwards, or when one seeks to apply the essentials named to the task of preaching from the Old Testament.

#### ROLF KNIERIM - A NEW METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

##### Origin of the Methodology.

The methodology under investigation here had its German beginning at Heidelberg and its American introduction at the School of Theology at Claremont. Rolf Knierim relates that during the mid 1950's at Heidelberg several young professors came together with the intent of cooperatively establishing a better methodology for preaching. The desire was that this methodology be inclusive and aware

of the various departments and disciplines within the theological institution. Together these young theologians sat with their students and began the work of formulating a methodology for preaching.

Included within this theological team were an Old Testament professor, a New Testament professor, a Church Historian, a Systematic Theologian or Ethicist, and a professor from the practical theology department. Further development of a methodology was made by other teams. German publications of this endeavor have been made from 1956 to the present.

Knierim was a participant in the ground work formulation of this methodology for preaching. In the summer of 1967, he offered a course entitled Old Testament Homiletical and Exegetical Seminar. The methodology here under examination was presented by Knierim. The students then worked with that methodology on various Old Testament texts. The papers of the students became the focal point of the classroom discussion.

As a result of participating in Knierim's class and engaging in personal conversations with him on this methodology, I will proceed to describe briefly the content of

this methodological approach followed by critical remarks.

### Summarization of the Methodology.

An overall view of this new methodological approach must be perceived in order to understand the dialogue principle involved in its unfolding. I shall here outline the procedure and then define in concise detail the content of the steps listed.

- I. Exegesis
  - a. Textual Criticism
  - b. Literary Criticism
  - c. Form Criticism
    1. Structural Analysis
    2. Genre
    3. Setting in life
  - d. Traditio-Historical Considerations
  - e. Summary of Exegesis
  - f. Intention of the text
- II. Relationship of the message of the text to the New Testament (or Old Testament).
- III. Relationship of this Biblical tradition to Church History.
- IV. Systematic Theological reflection on the message of the text.
- V. Confrontation of the message of the text with current problems.
- VI. Sermon Outline.

The dialogue principle means that each phase of the process in the outline moves forward with its conclusions to the next juncture of consideration and enters into

dialogue with that point of consideration. Creating tension among various concerns within the theological realm prevents the sermon from establishing false relationships between the message of the text and other related theological concerns. This methodology is concerned with (1) correct exegesis, (2) relating consistently the findings of that exegesis to other theological concerns and (3) finally presenting the intention of the text in a form suitable for contemporary preaching.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, many of the items listed in this exegetical outline were defined. I will here define those terms which were not specifically dealt with in the first chapter.

Textual Criticism, Literary Criticism and Form Criticism have been defined in general terms already. However, some more precise components of form criticism deserve some additional attention. The structural analysis refers to the systematic outlining of a text for the purpose of clarifying the points made by the writer. Often by looking to such a form, it becomes clear as to the intent of the author. For example, in I Samuel 11 is an account of Saul's rise to power as the first "anointed one"

(Messiah) of Israel. Through a structural analysis of the text, we can perceive the functions which accompany the office of the anointed one, namely, prophet, priest and king.<sup>22</sup> Structural analysis aids in perceiving the intention and the main points scored within a text.

Gattung is a German term meaning "type" or "genre." A part of the form critical task is that of identifying what type of text is under examination. This step asks: is this text prophetic literature, wisdom literature, narrative or a system of codes?

Sitz im leben is a German phrase meaning "situation" or "setting in life." What was going on politically and socially at the time recorded in the text? What were the events surrounding and calling forth the message of this text? These are the questions which are asked under Sitz im leben.

Extensive reference was made to the Tradition-Historical concerns in the first chapter. The work implicit here is to investigate the store of formal language

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<sup>22</sup>Rolf P. Knierim, "The Messianic Concept in The First Book of Samuel," in Jesus and the Historian (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), pp. 20-51.

commonly used to express certain thoughts and moods. This is very important in relationship to poetic and prophetic language. Traditio-Historical considerations seek to identify the extensive editorial reworking of texts as well as open up a view into the history of the cultus from which they arose.<sup>23</sup>

The text also needs to be examined in terms of its smaller units. This involves the examination of certain key words and terms as well as phrases. It would be incorrect to identify this part of the process as examining the text by verse, since the verses do not represent an adequate dividing apparatus of the texts. Instead, examination is made of words, terms and phrases according to and in the units established by the structural analysis.

The intention of the text is the focal point at the end of the exegetical process: what did the author intend to communicate or establish through this text? James Robinson asks in relationship to New Testament exegesis, "what is the point scored?" The content of the text may be historically restricted (mythological, e.g.) but the

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<sup>23</sup>Otto Kaiser and Werner Georg Kummel, Exegetical Method (New York: Seabury Press, 1967), p. 23.



intention is something different. The intention in this case would be that which is sought to be communicated through the medium of mythological language. The intention of the text cannot be firmly established if any of the exegetical steps are omitted. Establishing the intention of the text is the goal of the exegetical process.

The intention or message of the text must then be related to the New Testament (or Old Testament in the event that it is a New Testament text). This involves identification of a continuity or discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments on this particular point or at least implies a principle of correlation. Does this Old Testament theme appear in the New Testament? Does this New Testament idea have any relationship or roots in Old Testament traditions? The dialogue principle here means identifying the likeness or uniqueness of a passage in relationship to the other testament. The reason for such a dialogue becomes clear as we see the false distinction that has been made between Old and New Testaments, i.e., that the Old Testament is all law and the New Testament is all gospel. This is simply not true. Grace and judgment are terms which can be perceived in both the Old and New

Testaments. It is important that we establish and acknowledge this uncommonness before we go on to identify the distinguishing or differing characteristics of one testament from the other.

When bringing the message of a text, its Biblical intention and hence the Biblical tradition into dialogue with the history of the church, we are concerned with two things: (1) how the message of the text has been interpreted in the course of church history, and (2) how the church has dealt with the problems raised by the message of the text. Does the text receive a focus in church history? Does the text have a history of itself within the framework of the history of Christian thought? These are the questions which must be directed to a text in light of church history.

The systematizing of the Biblical views about God, Jesus, evil, etc., is the work of Biblical theology. Systematic theology has to do with placing the work of Biblical theology into a broader context which includes philosophy, world religions, sociology and psychology. Ott has called this work of systematics the process of thinking

while existing as a man of faith.<sup>24</sup> A systematic theological reflection on the intention of a text means that the specific message of that text be put into the wider context of our thinking about God. For example, if a particular text relates a message about a God of punishment, a God who kills, then how are we to understand that basic point in relationship to our belief that God is love and ultimate good? The movement here is from the specific theology of a text to the wider context of Biblical and systematic theology. Statements about God as good, love and justice are certainly themes which are found through specific exegesis. But these attributes about God must be set into the wider context of statements about God in both the Old and New Testaments, many of which depict him to be a God of wrath, holy wars and destruction.

The final step before formalizing a sermon outline is that of asking this basic question: what does the intention of this text as seen in light of these other disciplines have to do with contemporary problems? This can be

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<sup>24</sup>James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr. (eds.) The Later Heidegger and Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 94.

the ethical, anthropological, sociological or psychological question. This step brings the hermeneutics of history and systematic theology into dialogue with the hermeneutics of contemporary man in the widest possible context. It is very common to see this question asked immediately after a text is read. The new methodological approach bears out that this must be the last question directed toward a text before it is used as the foundation for a sermon. This is the step which demands a personal decision from the exegete in relationship to his own situation in life.

The final step is the sermon outline. In this outline should appear the intention of the text laid out in concise and specific terms. The consistency of transmission from exegesis to sermon outline should be evident. Careful attention should be given to how these points are illustrated and developed within the sermon. The mistake of so many sermons is that they do not reflect the critical work that an exegete has performed in preparation for the message. The critical work performed within this new methodology must clearly show itself in the structure of the sermon outline.

### Evaluation of the Approach.

Now we shall turn to the task of criticizing the work here presented to us by Knierim.

Positive Evaluation. The positive qualities of this methodology should be self-evident to the reader when they are thrust against the options previously examined. When looking to this new methodological approach in relationship to the other three options, this one shows a greater adequacy by nature of its inclusiveness. The strong points of the three methods examined thus far are covered by this method. This new methodology goes far beyond any other current methodology by placing the text in wider context, i.e., by relating systematic, historical, ethical and practical problems to the text. In no way can this methodology be accused of being structured with prejudiced notions about Biblical content.

Some current methodological options suggest emphasizing content over form, but in the end their main contributions tend to be in the area of form primarily and content secondarily. The new approach shows that to preach biblical content presupposes that a preacher become able to perform competent exegesis on specific passages of scripture.

Hence, exegesis is the key concern which must be dealt with if content is to be the primary concern of contemporary preaching. The new methodological approach is the only current method available which concerns itself with precision in Biblical interpretation and the relating of the Biblical message to contemporary problems.

The positive aspects of this new methodology will be born out further in the following chapter when this methodology is applied to specific Biblical texts.

Negative Evaluation. The first problem I perceive in suggesting this methodology as a living option for preachers today is not actually a weakness of the method itself. This methodology demands good exegetical ability which in fact most preachers clearly do not possess. This is not a weakness on the part of this method but points to a very realistic situation: we have many preachers but few exegetes.

Another problem has to do with the preacher who commits himself to the form of this method but becomes frustrated at the lack of resources necessary for the successful execution of the methodology. Two things should be remembered in relationship to this problem. First,

Knierim is the chairman of a form critical project which is seeking to create a two volume work which will have form critical considerations itemized on all the texts of the Old Testament. This work should be available by 1976.

Secondly, no matter what resources are available, the preacher must learn to make certain critical decisions along the way himself. Competence in exegesis comes only with much practice and after many mistakes. Ideally, the most rapid pace of growth in exegeting can be expected when exegesis can be discussed with a competent scholar.

A problem which could arise within this methodology is that of preaching biblicistically or legalistically. The first has to do with preaching from a specific text whose message could not be considered an adequate systematic theological statement about Biblical content. The work of systematic theology within this methodology should guard against this problem but the problem still exists. The second has to do with preaching judgment, for example, totally out of the over-arching context of grace. This is moralistic preaching. The systematic theological considerations within this methodology should guard against this.

However, this problem does exist as a common error committed by the exegete who utilizes this new approach.

Additional problems arise at the point of systematic theology. Here it is easy to lose sight of the intention of the text and mold the message of the sermon around whatever theologian happens to have the greatest amount of influence on the exegete. Throughout the dialogical process, it is imperative that the intention of the text is not perverted in the midst of comparison and confrontation. This again is not as much a criticism of the method as much as it is a warning about a realistic problem related to the approach.

It should be re-emphasized here that hermeneutics is interpretation, but presupposes a methodology. The intent of the new approach is that an adequate interpretation of Biblical material be acquired. Methodology serves the function of bringing the exegete to an adequate understanding of a text so that a competent interpretation can be made of the Biblical material.

The new methodological approach is the only one of the methods under examination which states a method and defines the process inherent in that method. Davis and



Edwards present systematic statements and agree that preaching should center on content rather than form. But they do not deal with how to get at that content which is to be preached. Stevenson seeks to present a methodology for preaching but does not define terms well enough nor does he relate the findings of his exegesis in a systematic way to other fields of concern which intersect with the intention of a text. This leads me to state that at the present time the new methodological approach introduced by Knierim most adequately shows the way toward gaining concise content for Biblical preaching today. Hence, it will be this approach that will be applied to two Biblical texts in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE NEW APPROACH

#### OLD TESTAMENT:

#### II Samuel 12: 1-15a--The David and Nathan Confrontation

##### I. Exegesis.

a. Text and Translation. A discussion of the apparent problems and inconsistencies within the framework of this text will be given under literary criticism. The text reads as follows:

- vs. 1 And the Lord sent Nathan (the prophet) to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor.
- vs. 2 The rich man had very many flocks and herds;
- vs. 3 but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his morsel, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him.
- vs. 4 Now there came a traveller to the rich man, and he could not bear to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

- vs. 5 Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die;
- vs. 6 and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and could not bear to touch his own (property)."
- vs. 7 Nathan said to David, "You are the man. Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul;
- vs. 8 and I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the daughters of Israel and of Judah; and if this were too little, I would add to you as much more.
- vs. 9 Why have you despised the Lord, to do what is evil in my sight? You have smitten Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword of the Ammonites.
- vs. 10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house---because you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'
- vs. 11 Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbour, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.
- vs. 12 For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.'"
- vs. 13 David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die.

vs. 14 Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the enemies of the Lord, the child that is born to you must die."

vs. 15 Then Nathan went to his house.<sup>1</sup>

b. Literary Criticism. The text is a portion of a larger group of narratives (II Samuel 8-20; I Kings 1-2) which are referred to as the Court History of David. This presentation of the Court History of David is considered a masterpiece of Near Eastern historiography. The authorship of these texts is uncertain.<sup>2</sup>

Rost observes that these narratives exhibit the following characteristics: (1) they "place major emphasis on conversations, developing each as a brief independent scene;" (2) they "rarely mention God as the actual cause of events;" and (3) they "relegate the priesthood and cult to the background."<sup>3</sup>

The text (1-15a) is a unit as its symmetrical structure shows. It is a concise narrative of the encounter

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<sup>1</sup>Jans Wilhelm Hertzberg, I & II Samuel (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), pp. 307, 308.

<sup>2</sup>Ernst Sellin and Georg Fohrer, Introduction to the Old Testament (New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 222.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

of David and Nathan which has its climax in a dialogue consisting of short sentences (see structural analysis).<sup>4</sup>

This event has been preserved (1) as the original source and (2) through the work of the Deuteronomistic writer.

c. Form Criticism. 1. Structural Analysis.<sup>5</sup>

- I. Extended Introduction: Nathan's Mission and Appearance (1a)
- II. Nathan's Report (1b-4)
- III. David's judgment (5f)
- IV. Nathan's disclosure (7a) and message (7b-12)
  - 1. The disclosure (7a)
  - 2. The message (7b-12)
    - (a) Message formula (7b/a)
    - (b) Statement of the double presupposition (7b/B and 8)
      - (1) Saved from the hand of Saul (given power)
      - (2) Given wives
    - (c) The double accusation (9)
      - (1) Basically - contempt of Yahweh (9a)
      - (2) Concretely - two points of accusation (9b and c)
        - a. Murder
        - b. Adultery
    - (d) The double threat (10-12)
      - (1) The sword against the house (10)
      - (2) Renewed message formula: the disaster about the marriage (11f)
        - a. Wives taken away (11)
        - b. Publicly instead of privately (13a)

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<sup>4</sup>Hertzberg, op. cit., p. 235.

<sup>5</sup>Rolf P. Knierim, "II Samuel 12:1-15," Deutsches Pfarrerblatt, 1 H 2415 D, (May 1, 1964), 235.

- V. David's acknowledgement of the crimes (13a)
- VI. The double judgment of God (13b & 14)
- VII. Nathan's departure (15a)

The structural analysis reveals several important elements which should be specifically identified. Nathan's report, II, is a method of tricking David. Nathan's trap is that of distracting David so that David will make a true judgment concerning the crimes of murder and adultery. David's judgment, III, is actually a judgment upon himself. Hence, David is trapped by Nathan's trick.

Nathan discloses David's crimes, IV, and confronts David on the basis of what Yahweh has done for David in the past. David, in turn, confesses to the crimes, V.

The "double judgment" of Yahweh, VI, is the focal point of the narrative. This judgment is upon David and his family. The double judgment contains a statement of forgiveness and the unavoidable consequence. The story has a miraculous outcome in that although the judgment upon David demands death as a result of the crimes, David is allowed to live because of the forgiveness of Yahweh.

c. Form Criticism. 2. Genre. This pericope is an historical narrative about a prophet. Here prophetic thought comes into confrontation with the early history of

the monarchy and its traditions. The final form is of a style geared to the popular mind.

c. Form Criticism. 3. Setting in Life. The text is part of a court story written down by a court writer during the time of Solomon.<sup>6</sup> Around 550 B.C., the Deuteronomistic writer incorporated this text into his own historical account. This accounts for the dual focal point in the narrative: (1) immediate impact of the event, and (2) the future impact of the event.<sup>7</sup>

d. Traditio-Historical Considerations. The subsequent verses of this text place this originally single story into the total context of stories which relate David's rise to power and family story. The chaotic events surrounding the succession to the throne are regarded as a consequence of these crimes. The announcement of Nathan implies that no accidents are involved, only penalizing fate sent from God.

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<sup>6</sup>K. Grobel, "Samuel," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, IV, 205.

<sup>7</sup>Knierim, op. cit., p. 235.

There are two traditions involved here which both attest to the fact that David's confession saves him and him alone. These traditions differ concerning the extent of the penalty. In the actual consequence, only the child dies. In Nathan's threat and prediction, the family breaks up. These separate traditions alter the focal point of the story: (1) in the actual consequence the control of the consequences within the immediate sphere of activity is the main point; (2) in Nathan's threat the main point is the non-damning effect of the consequence upon the family in the future. The implication of the sin of David, therefore, has a different effect upon different circles of readers.<sup>8</sup>

e. Summary of Exegesis. II Samuel 12: 1-15a is a primitive but concise narrative of David's encounter with Nathan. The text is a part of the Court History of David within the negative framework of this activity (Chapters 9-24). This text is a court story which was written down by a court recorded during the time of Solomon. The event recorded in the text relates the events surrounding David's

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.



crimes with Bathsheba. The history of traditions presents a dual focal point in the narrative: (1) the immediate sphere of activity; and (2) the future effect of David's crimes upon his family.

f. Intention of the Text. The intent of the text is singular but has a dual perspective. The text shows the power of Yahweh's forgiveness which overcomes his own judgment and hence how Yahweh's forgiveness allowed David to maintain his rulership in light of his crimes of murder and adultery. Our proper focal point is Yahweh's forgiveness even in spite of immediate consequences.

## II. Relationship of the Message of the Text to the New Testament

The intention of this text centers on Yahweh's forgiveness. The experience of forgiveness as fact in the Old and New Testaments is the same but the act itself is different. The first basic difference between forgiveness in the Old Testament and New Testament is that in the Old forgiveness is not administered in the name of Jesus Christ. The New Testament proclamation says that the forgiveness of God has been objectified in the events surrounding the person of Jesus Christ.

The second difference between our text and the New Testament concept of forgiveness is the inter-relationship of disease and crimes. In the Old Testament, forgiveness meant a physical healing which was the consequence of sin and crimes being forgiven. The eschatological dimension of the Christian faith allows the Christian to experience forgiveness even if he remains in sickness. In the New Testament, forgiveness is not dependent upon a manifestation in the present realm of experience.

Now we must face the question concerning the similarity between the experience of David and us Christians. Is there a similarity? The answer is yes. Christians are changed in relationship to their sins and crimes and receive forgiveness through the cross of Jesus Christ. The experience of David's personal<sup>a</sup> encounter with Yahweh and our confrontation in Jesus Christ are the same. Under the cross of Jesus Christ, the experience of David is universalized for all of us. Forgiveness comes not out of personal encounter with God in the sense that David experienced it, but out of our identification with the experience of David under the Christian gospel.

We are justified in using this Old Testament text within the context of the Christian faith because the

change from death sentence to life is precisely the Christian experience of our reality under Jesus Christ. Our future, like David's, is open and no longer dependent upon the death sentence over us.

### III. Relationship of This Biblical Tradition to Church History.

The question which must now be raised as a result of our exegesis is this: where in church historical traditions have men used this text which talks about death sentence and forgiveness? We shall examine two examples of the use of this text in church history, one from Augustine and one from John Calvin.

Augustine uses this text to say that many men will fall with David but very few will rise with him. Augustine says that there is a warning here in relationship to David's crimes: "let them hear who have not fallen lest they fall; let them hear that have fallen that they might rise."<sup>9</sup> When utilizing this text, Augustine really wants to talk about something else besides the findings of our exegesis. Augustine makes a moralization about the nature

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<sup>9</sup>Augustine, "On the Psalms," The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), p. 190.

of sin. He insists that carnal pleasure is the beginning of all sin. Hence, he uses this text to fortify his preconceived dogma about sin rather than relating its message about death sentence and forgiveness. Augustine cannot be used for our understanding of the text in light of our exegesis.

John Calvin also seeks to illustrate something other than what the text says. He uses this text to say that God so uses the works of the ungodly and so bends their minds to carry out his judgments that He remains pure from every stain.<sup>10</sup> For Calvin, the text functions as a justification of the judgment of God upon man. Within Calvinistic theology to admit to sin, i.e., "I am a sinner," means that one is saying to God, "you are a just God." This is the argument from a theodicy position.

The conclusion here is that both Augustine and Calvin want to talk about something other than what the text says. The necessity of our examining the text today is imperative because it has been utilized falsely within the framework of church history. Our justification for

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<sup>10</sup>John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I, 228.

this contemporary encounter with the text is on the basis of the findings of our exegesis.

#### IV. Systematic Theological Reflection on the Message of the Text.

The systematic theological question which comes upon us at this point is this: how do we experience the forgiveness of sins, i.e., the change from death sentence to life?

For us Christians, forgiveness is experienced as a word event. This event may be the word of forgiveness through the sermon or the Lord's Supper or the counseling experience. Now we are posed with the question concerning the relationship of word and act in conveying forgiveness.

Three problems within soteriology need to be enumerated here. First, how does the objective act (forgiveness of sins through the cross of Jesus Christ) produce subjective change in the individual? Second, what is the relationship between confession and forgiveness? Which should come first? Can the order of occurrence vary with different events? Third, what about the problem of suffering certain consequences even after one has been forgiven for the act which causes the suffering?

These theological problems concerning soteriology are by no means solved at the present time. It is clear that in relationship to our text II Samuel 12: 1-15a relates most directly to the second problem raised here. David received forgiveness after his confession concerning his crimes with Bathsheba. Lutheran and Barthian theologians have argued over this point extensively during this century. The Lutheran theologians held that in order to receive forgiveness one must first confess his sins. Only upon the confession of sins can salvation be manifested within the life of the individual, say these theologians. The Barthians, on the other hand, said that only after forgiveness of sins can we really know how sinful we were and are. Hence, for the Barthians, the realization of forgiveness within the life of the individual had to <sup>precede</sup> proceed the confession of sin. Our text relates more directly the experienced referred to by the Lutheran theologians.

#### V. Confrontation of the Message of the Text With Current Problems.

The message of our text has to do with a specific change, from death sentence to forgiveness of crimes. This

change from death sentence to forgiveness is a message which should be brought to bear upon some of our current problems.

Today we need to ask questions about our penal system. Does this change from death sentence (condemnation) to forgiveness manifest itself within that system? This question is appropriate for our prison complex since its intent is that of being a correctional institution rather than an institution whose job it is to punish criminals.

The problem can best be illustrated through a hypothetical example concerning a man who is condemned to death for murder. Assuming that the man comes to the point of confessing the brutality of his act and desires forgiveness, how shall we talk about the reality of forgiveness within the context of his life? Could we say to him, that on account of the fact that you have confessed to your crime, you are now forgiven and may go free? This is impossible for a system to be established in this manner. On the other hand, could we say, you have received forgiveness of sins; you will still be put in the gas chamber and will die, but your soul is forgiven and will go to live with God

eternally? This is not a manifestation of forgiveness at all. Then how shall we deal with the problem?

A cooperative effort is needed between those who operate our "correctional" institutions and those who are aware of the message of this change from death sentence to forgiveness. Within the penal systems, the meaning of "correction" should be more precisely defined. How this correction or change in the attitude of the criminal takes place should be the prime concern of the correctional institution. At that point, the process of deciding when a person is equipped to re-enter society must be dealt with. Another question which should be posed at this juncture has to do with the chances for a man who has been set free from prison gaining acceptance in our society. Do we not deny the manifestation of forgiveness which the state offers a person by refusing to hire him because of his past crimes? The main point here is that a cooperative effort between those who subscribe to this message about the change from death sentence to life and those who must define the meaning of correction and pardon within the judicial system of our country need to begin the process of working together



on our system which in fact is currently far from correctional in nature.

The burden of guilt experienced by us as a result of our crimes which we commit, both personally and corporately, should not be the controlling factor over our future. God's forgiveness makes it possible for us to bear the burden we have on account of the knowledge that God has forgiven us. Even if we are the offender or the offended, the sharing in the forgiveness of God through Christ enables us both to mount the burden of our guilt and our affliction. The future contains hope because of the knowledge that one forgives and the other is forgiven.

## VI. Sermon Outline.

### "God Has Put Away Your Crimes" II Samuel 12: 1-15a

#### Introduction

1. The story unfolded:
  - Confrontation- Nathan confronts David with his crimes through a trick.
  - Confession- David confesses to the crimes.
  - Focal point- the double judgment of God.
  - Forgiveness- God forgives David's crimes.
2. Main point: God's forgiveness is powerful enough to overcome his own judgment, and hence enables David to maintain his rulership.
3. Our sermon will deal with this miraculous change from condemnation to life.

## I The Change.

- a. Nature of the change - from death sentence to life.
- b. Agent of the change - God himself.
- c. Meaning of the change - maintenance of the rulership.

## II The Reason for the Change.

- a. God's forgiveness
  1. Old Testament understanding - received through his messengers.
  2. New Testament understanding - received through the cross of Jesus Christ.
- b. Confessional response
  1. A necessity for individuals
  2. A necessity for the church
  3. A necessity for our nation

## III The Relationship between Condemnation and Forgiveness.

- a. How do we receive forgiveness?
  1. Paul - with cross of Jesus Christ.
  2. Luther - through acknowledgment of our sins.
  3. Barth - through acceptance of forgiveness.
- b. What does this knowledge of the change say to our situation?

It speaks to our penal system.
- c. The church has the possibility of confronting man with the change.
  1. Through the sermon
  2. Through the sacraments
  3. Through counseling

## Conclusion

1. Nathan's story is our story.
2. God confronted us with the change through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
3. Through Christ, God forgives you.

## NEW TESTAMENT

Mark 12: 13-17--The Question About  
Tribute to CaesarI. Exegesis.

a. Text and Translation. The text in Mark which is under investigation is a very well constructed apophthegm which stands as a unity in itself.<sup>11</sup> The literal translation of this apophthegm is:

- vs. 13 And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and Herodians that in word (conversation) they might catch him.
- vs. 14 And having come they say to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true and you (do) not care about no one; for you do not look into the face of men, but in truth you teach the way of God. Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Should we give or should we not give?"
- vs. 15 But he knowing their hypocrisy said to them, 'Why do you tempt me? Bring me a denarius in order that I might see (it).'
- vs. 16 And they brought (it). And he said to them, 'Of whom is this likeness and inscription?' And they said to him, '(Of) Caesar.'
- vs. 17 And Jesus said to them, 'The things of Caesar give back to Caesar, and the things of God, to God.' And they wondered at him.

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<sup>11</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963), p. 26.

b. Literary Criticism. This text is a concisely constructed story about Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees and the Herodians about tribute to Caesar. The literary style depicts a carefully contrived question which is intended to trap Jesus. The style vividly portrays a hunter and the one who is hunted.<sup>12</sup>

Verse 13 sets the stage and identifies the players (i.e., introduces those involved in the story). Verse 14 focuses on the main question, tribute to Caesar and God. Verses 15 and 16 present a surprising counter question. Verse 17 is the focal point of the story: the pronouncement of Jesus. Verse 17 also reveals the reaction of the people to Jesus' pronouncement. This common literary style will be discussed further under form criticism.

c. Form Criticism. 1. Structural Analysis.

- I. The Setting (vs. 13)
  - a. Jesus
  - b. Pharisees
  - c. Herodians
- II. The Question (vs. 14)
  - a. Their approval
  - b. Double question about tribute

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<sup>12</sup>Ezra P. Gould, Gospel According to St. Mark (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896), pp. 224, 225.

- III. The Counter-Question (vs. 15)
  - a. Perception of hypocrisy (15a)
  - b. Denarius requested (15b)
  - c. Answer (16)
- IV. The Pronouncement of Jesus (vs. 17a)
- V. The Effect of the Pronouncement upon the listeners (vs. 17b)

This structural analysis itself shows that the text is an apophthegm story. Such a story involves three elements or characteristics:

(1) A saying or pronouncement of Jesus for which everything else in the narrative serves as a framework.

(2) Simplicity and brevity. The introduction gives us just enough detail to make the saying intelligible, but gives no extensive detail. In the case of Mark 12: 13-17, it consists of a question which leads up to the central saying.

(3) It has an "external rounding off." The narrative ends with a saying of Jesus in our text and in others with his actions which give the effect of the saying.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>E. Basil Redlich, Form Criticism, Its Value and Limitations (London: Duckworth, 1948), pp. 81-83.

c. Form Criticism. 2. Genre. This is an apophthegm of Jesus which was prompted by a question by his opponents.

c. Form Criticism. 3. Setting in Life. Bultmann says that this apophthegm of Jesus probably did not circulate independently (vs. 17) but was transmitted through a very well-constructed pronouncement story. The form of this saying leads Bultmann to conclude that this story does not have its setting within the early church.<sup>14</sup> In the last analysis, we do not know the setting of the text.

d. Traditio-Historical Considerations. This is an actual saying of the historical Jesus. This conclusion is based upon the following criteria:

(a) Criterion of dissimilarity: that the earliest form of the saying is authentic is shown through seeing its dissimilarity to characteristic emphases both of ancient Judaism and of the early church.<sup>15</sup> Upon the second part of this statement, this point should be made: if we are to

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<sup>14</sup>Bultmann, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>15</sup>Norman Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 39.

seek that which is most characteristic of Jesus, it will be found not in the things which he shares with his contemporaries, but in the things wherein he differs from them.<sup>16</sup>

(b) Criterion of coherence: "material from the earliest strata of the tradition may be accepted as authentic by means of the criterion of dissimilarity."<sup>17</sup> By this criterion, we may reasonably conclude that Mark 12: 13-17 represents the earliest strata of material and is an authentic saying of the historical Jesus. Mark is that earliest strata of material as seen in its brevity and conciseness of language. This criterion BY ITSELF does not prove that Mark's record goes back to Jesus. Matthew and Luke both elaborate at the introduction and conclusion of this apophthegm. It appears that Mark served as the early source for Matthew and Luke to utilize.

e. Summary of Exegesis. Mark 12: 13-17 is a very well constructed apophthegm which stands as a unity in itself. The text is a "conflict and didactic" saying and involves a question by opponents of Jesus.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

The saying or pronouncement of this text which is ascribed to Jesus appears to be an actual saying of the historical Jesus. This fact is established through current exegetical methods and criterion. The text is not an early Christian community product and shows very little editorial activity if any.

f. Intention of the Text. The Pharisees and Herodians were intent upon trapping Jesus with a question. What results is a pronouncement of Jesus which presents his listeners with a radical confrontation with God. The intention of the text is to show through this questioning of Jesus what it means to take God seriously. Jesus calls for them to make no compromises but to give to Caesar what is his and God what belongs to Him. This is the radical obedience of Jesus. Hence, the listeners are confronted with the question of "what is God's?" They must answer to themselves as to whether or not they are giving to God what they say belongs to him. Jesus does not advocate a separation nor a uniting of state and religion. Instead he poses the question of what it means to take each seriously without compromise.



## II. The Message of the Text and the Old Testament.

In our text, we find Jesus confronting his listeners directly with God through himself. This is the eschatological thrust of the message of Jesus. Jesus was not the first to perform this task. Other prophets before him performed the same function which Jesus did in this story.

Amos was a prophet who presented the people of his time with the same type of radical confrontation with God. In Amos 5: 4-7, we find these words:

For thus says Yahweh to the house of Israel:

'Seek me and live:

but do not seek Bethel,  
and do not enter into Gilgal  
or cross over to Beer-sheba;  
for Gilgal shall surely go into exile,  
and Bethel shall come to nought.'

Seek Yahweh and live,  
lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph,  
and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel,

O you who turn justice to wormwood,  
and cast down righteousness to the earth!

Amos was speaking against the canonical faith and religious life of the people of his time. It would be like someone saying today, "don't go to church because all that go there are perverted."

The radical confrontation of Amos came in the words of Yahweh which he related: "Seek me." If God's people must be told to seek Him, it must be on account of the fact that they have not yet found him. The radical nature of this confrontation and that of Jesus' in our text are identical. The Pharisees and Herodians had to answer to themselves what it meant to give to God what was His. The people of God whom Amos addressed had to answer to themselves what it meant to seek God. The future for both of these groups was dependent upon those who were still in search of God.

### III. Relationship of This Biblical Tradition to Church History.

Traditionally, this text has served as a proof text for those who advocated separation between church and state. Often this text has been used to point out that beliefs and celebrations of the church should not interfere, affect or conflict with the affairs of the state since they belong in two separate realms of existence: the sacred and the secular.

A generalized view of the traditional Catholic and Protestant positions concerning the relationship of church

and state is imperative here. "The Catholic has traditionally believed that men seek their own ends because they have lost God and that if they find God again they may be redeemed of their self-worship and of the social anarchy which results when the immediate ends of life are transmuted into ultimate ends."<sup>18</sup> The Protestant has traditionally held a more serious view concerning sin. He cannot accept the fact that Christians, who sincerely worship God are free from the sin of self-indulgence in the form of self-exaltation. For this reason, he is afraid of an authoritarian society. He is very much certain that any special group endowed with social power will in the end be corrupted. For him, this is inevitable.<sup>19</sup>

In America, we can see very clearly through our history that our forefathers who wrote the constitution wanted to avoid a religious monopoly on the political structure of the United States. They did not become too specific about the support of the state or religious institutions. Because we have so many religious factions in the

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<sup>18</sup>Harry R. Davis and Robert C. Good, Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics (New York: Charles Scribners & Sons, 1960), p. 204.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

United States, it has probably been best that support of religious institutions has not been given by the government in discriminatory fashion.

When we talk about the separation of church and state in America, all that has been historically implied is that it is unlawful for the government to establish one religion through favoritism and suppress all others. I am sure that members of the Jewish community would object to our saying that this has been accomplished.

Within the Protestant tradition, we have seen that it is not as important to have a Christian ruler as it is to have a Christian prophet. This means that for Protestants a society should be Christian in its culture rather than in its official political position. If the society chooses the Christian faith, then it is possible for the Christian Church to exist and also possible for men to preach with the authority of the church, grace, judgment and the need for obedience to the will of God.<sup>20</sup>

Our church historical discussion should not deprive us from the text which makes a contribution to the church

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

and state discussion but more than this, offers a presupposition concerning the relationship between church and state.

#### IV. Systematic Theological Reflection on the Message of the Text.

In every age, the believing community is confronted with the need to state explicitly its position regarding acknowledgement of its temporal governmental structures while seeking to give complete obedience to the will of God. This section on systematics is a commentary on the word of Jesus, i.e., how groups have sought to be obedient to this word.

H. Richard Niebuhr has sought to help us in stating the relationship between "Christ and Culture." This discussion is helpful for us to come to an understanding of the options available in making a statement about the relationship of church and state. Niebuhr maintains that five options are available in identifying this relationship between Christ and culture. The first option is that of Christ against culture. This position rejects culture's claim to authority. God and the world are opposed and the Christian can love only the former. Corruption and sin are

equated with civilization. This position is epitomized by the sectarian viewpoint, the monastic movement, and is found in the prophet Amos. Tertullian reflects this thinking along with Tolstoy. Tolstoy sees Christ as the giver of laws which are to be literally grasped and would hence force us to reject the institutions of the world, such as property, church and state.

The second option is that of Christ of culture. Jesus is identified with what is best in a society. Whatever is good in society is in that state because of what Jesus has made it. The influence of the Christ perfects the culture. No tension is felt here between church and state since Christ persuades both towards the best that is in them both. Gnosticism was like this, i.e., identifying Christ solely in terms of their own culture. The problem here is that this view accomodates Christ to culture only by distorting the historic Jesus. This view also seeks to replace revelation with reason but has to accept the irrational fact of Jesus.

The third option is that of Christ above culture. This answer seeks to synthesize the first two positions. These see the way in which Christ's demands run counter to

culture and yet they see culture as good, arising from the Creator. Clement of Alexander realized that a man must be good in the cultural sense before he can go on to the Christian graces. Thomas Aquinas saw reason necessary as far as it goes; then revelation appears. Natural law appears he said, but only with the divine law above it. The good of culture and of God both have their place.

The fourth option is that of Christ and culture in paradox. Here it is held that sin is in all of man's works. Before God there is no distinction between what we call good and evil. The dualist attacks all culture, yet realizes that he is a sinful part of it and must live in it. He views God as making demands which he finds impossible to act upon. Luther's dualism must be brought out here. God's forgiveness affects the inner man, says Luther, but social life cannot be redeemed. This option in the last analysis only describes the problem without offering a solution.

The fifth option sees Christ as the transformer of culture. Emphasis upon the creative, influential work of God in the world is made here. Emphasis is not upon just resisting sin, but getting over the sin problem. Creation

and fall are important concepts with this position. Creation is good. In the fall, this creation was corrupted. This corrupted creation can be corrected because all things are possible for God in history. Culture is under the governing rule of God, and Christians must be socially responsible in obedience to God. Their duty is to make Christ the Lord of culture.<sup>21</sup>

Although Niebuhr does not offer any one of these options as a conclusive statement, we must push beyond his lack of desire to choose. Alfred North Whitehead has defined Christianity as "the appeal to the life of Christ as the revelation of God and of His agency in the world."<sup>22</sup> The implication is that commitment and obedience to God implies that a certain form of visible action logically follows the committing of one's self to God. The action at a certain existential moment in history becomes the continual variable question for the Christian. This important question remains for us in this moment of history.

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<sup>21</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Row, 1951).

<sup>22</sup>Alfred North Whitehead, The Adventures of Ideas (New York: Macmillan, 1938), p. 170.



## V. The Message of the Text and Current Problems.

The implication of this text for our present time means that we as Christians need to be able to identify the specific questions which need to be placed before ourselves and our religious and political leaders. First, the question of the meaning of human rights needs to be directed both to the governmental and religious leaders. What does it mean to be obedient to God and the constitution in matters of race relations? If this question is honestly confronted by us and our leaders, our answer will definitely be one which describes a situation greatly different from our actual situation today.

Second, as Christians we must ask what it means to "give to God what is his" in our modern world. At another time, Jesus called out the legal ways in which persons seek to shirk responsibility to God. He cited the practice of corban. This was a legal religious maneuver by which a man could eliminate his responsibility for family and do it in the name of "giving to God" (Mark 7: 1-23). Jesus denounced such craftiness and deceit. The possibility of discrimination in our society is seen through the school systems which have not complied with the defacto

segregation laws and have gotten away with it until the present time. The Christian must speak to this situation because in the last analysis a refusal to integrate means inferior education for minority groups. Here is a legal way of placing judgment in the form of inferior education upon certain ethnic groups.

Today we need to ask the question as Americans and as Christians, what does it mean to live out the intents of the constitution and our own religious beliefs? Our future is dependent upon those who will continually seek to answer these questions in every new situation.

## VI. Sermon Outline.

### "God and Washington" Mark 12: 13-17

#### Introduction

1. Jesus' encounter with opponents.
2. The saying.
3. The response.

#### I Double Statement of Jesus.

- a. Denial of theocratic state.
- b. Affirmation of another principle - radical obedience to God.
- c. Intention: The separate concepts of service to God and country should be united under the question of what it means to serve God without compromise.

## II The Statement in the Situation of the Relationship of Church and State.

- a. New Testament
  - 1. The text
  - 2. Paul
- b. The opponents of Jesus
  - 1. Pharisees
  - 2. Herodians
- c. Church History
  - 1. Past
  - 2. Present

## III The Statement in the Time of Conflict Between Church and State

- a. Jesus' own period under Rome
- b. Church History: Holy Wars
- c. Adolf Hitler and Germany
- d. Current situation

## Conclusion

- 1. Jesus defined radical obedience in himself.
- 2. God is not a manipulator, but persuader.
  - a. In matters of faith
  - b. In matters of government
  - c. In matters of human relationships
- 3. Understanding of God's love in Christ precedes appropriate action in the world.

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